

“refigure whiteness in antiracist, antihomophobic, and antisexist ways” • “the hegemony of whiteness in defining Finnishness” • “white fragility” • “‘race’ is a social fact” • “in fact, power produces domains of objects and rituals of truth” • “normalization of America’s racial hierarchies”

Ari Helo

THE LOST WAGES OF WHITENESS STUDIES

**A CRITICAL APPRAISAL OF INTERSECTIONALITY
IN FINLAND AND THE UNITED STATES**

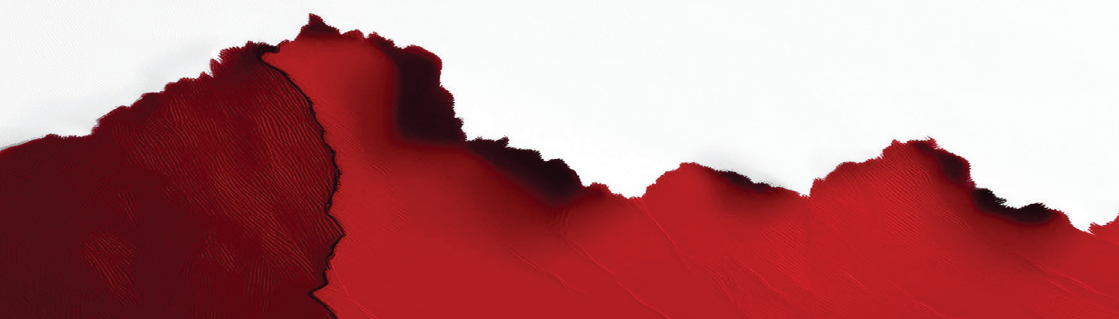
**Finnish
Methodological
Society**

Would you truly believe—as intersectional whiteness studies scholars inform us—that President Obama was only “a black face on the same old white supremacy”? Would you believe that Finland’s excellent international rankings in social equality only “serve to further the notion of homogeneity and the hegemony of whiteness in defining Finnishness”? The better social policies you exercise, the more hegemonic you become?

The problem is about credibility of academic social studies research in general, which intersectionality puts at risk because of its fundamental methodological deficiencies. Despite their nobly humanist purposes, intersectional scholars fail to follow any academically valid procedure of argumentation. They do not strengthen, but weaken our understanding of the basic premises of scientific social studies.

With their pseudoscientific reasoning intersectional whiteness scholars are capable of providing proofs only of their own theoretical presumptions, while incapable of distinguishing between economic, mental, political, and social structures in their allegedly “structural” whiteness analysis of the entire postcolonial world order. Empirically intersectional scholars focus on proving how incompletely people grasp their esoteric marginalization theories.

Because of its huge popularity in the humanities and social sciences it is easy to imagine that the field of whiteness studies must have some innovative scholarly value. This book proves that it has none. And it proves it by direct quotations from intersectional whiteness scholars themselves.



Ari Helo

The Lost Wages of Whiteness Studies:
A Critical Appraisal of Intersectionality
in Finland and the United States

Finnish Methodology Society
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Dedicated to my former students genuinely interested in intellectual history: Lauri Huumonen, Aleksi Jalavala, Janne Junes, Janne Kuoppala, Jonathan Lagerquist, Janne Metsänheimo, Ossi Tornberg, and many others.

"If it is life that you feel you are missing I can tell you where to find it. In the law courts, in business, in government. There is nothing occurring in the streets. Nothing but a dumbshow composed of the helpless and the impotent."

– Cormac McCarthy, *Suttree*, 1979, 15.

"Hell, it took only your first day in a Montana flop or standing over your mother's unmarked grave to know that *equal* was the one thing all men were not. A few lived like kings, and the rest hugged the dirt until it cracked open and took them home."

– Jess Walter, *The Cold Millions*, 2020, 25.

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Introduction & Acknowledgments

CONCERN FOR INDIVIDUAL HUMAN RIGHTS

We all know about the woke phenomenon, antiracism, and the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement. Many of us are concerned about gross social inequities that plague the world. But not too many are aware that there is an entire academic research tradition underlying all central woke teachings about inequalities. This fashionable academic trend is called intersectionality, and the so-called whiteness studies represent the most elemental part of it.

This book is written to prove that intersectional scholarship purposefully dismisses traditional, academic methodological thinking with its good intentions toward enhancing equality among us all. It thus does not strengthen, but weakens our understanding of academically valid argumentation and research. The problem is about credibility of academic social studies research in general, which intersectionality puts at risk because of its fundamental methodological deficiencies.

The intersectional approach, in which the purpose of study is to change its very object—the social mechanisms producing discrimination and marginalization—confuses research with decision-making based on researched knowledge. The fundamental approach is hence in tension with traditional scientific thinking. One may characterize intersectionality as a faulty revolutionary theory, which currently forces its accusations of racism and sexism upon all sectors of social life, including university education and the media. Put into practice, it often appears in the form of a woke mass movement accusing white people of any and all problems of the world.

Intersectional whiteness studies scholars are not interested in the racist white power movements, which they consider somewhat marginal. Instead, for intersectional scholarship the term “whiteness”

(or “white supremacy”) refers to all white people’s allegedly inborn social privileges in opposition to the rest of humankind.

As for the book’s potentially political character let me state that a critical attitude toward intersectionality does not make the scholar an enemy of minorities, nor does it need to convey the scholar’s own political position. In politics we make value choices constantly, whereas social studies are supposed to provide valid information for making politics, not to provide mere opinions.

To be sure, one might wonder why, in Finland, the schooling of immigrants tends to suffer from chronic underfinancing, this being glaringly at odds with the interest of the entire nation. By the same token, this critical appraisal of intersectionality has nothing to offer to white supremacy groups, European anti-immigration parties, or even to Trumpists in the United States. We are dealing with saving the academic credibility of social studies, both from the left and from the right.

In addition to addressing the larger public, this book is written specifically for academic researchers. The majority of them still have a considerably obscure understanding of intersectionality. Because of its huge popularity in the humanities and social sciences it is easy to imagine that intersectionality has to have some innovative scholarly value. This book proves that it has none. And it proves it by direct quotations from intersectional scholars themselves, the errors and misunderstandings explained in each and every occasion.

My purpose is, hence, to offer a research-based analysis of the central intersectional intellectual misconceptions, not a general polemic against intersectionality. If there are mishaps in handling the issue, my mistakes must be shown to be so and corrected, as I have brought up what I consider fundamental mistakes of intersectional scholarship in general. Out of three African American scholars critical of such antiracist apostles as Robin DiAngelo and Ibram X. Kendi, two argue that their thinking is outright religious rather than scientific in character and one that it does not represent so much a religion as a cult.¹

The research question is large, but simple: How was the whiteness paradigm born and how does it fundamentally characterize intersectional research orientation?

Let us define some central terms first. By intersectionality I refer to the paradigmatic intent of distinguishing the privileged and all others in any research that studies discrimination and marginalization. Intersectionality speaks of intersections of such “categories” as class, gender, sex, and ethnicity, which are all claimed to be oppressive for anyone occupying an intersectional social position in which two or more such categories may be seen as intersecting or overlapping.

Intentionally bypassing the fact that in the competitive social ordering of modern society people compete for everything—favorite jobs, favorite houses, and favorite spouses—as individuals, not as members of this or that oppressed minority, intersectionality explains all human problems as arising from particular intersectional social positions. Hence, oppression and misrecognition always appear as a problem regarding one’s presumed group identity rather than individual identity.

That all forms of marginalization result from oppression is the main thesis of this entire thought tradition. Intersectionality approaches every particular problem of human life as manifesting itself in the mine field of masculine, white supremacy. This is how—even if only on an abstract level—intersectionality is capable of both exposing those guilty of the social problem in question and creating comforting discourse for the victims of oppression via a set of self-victimization strategies, a specialty of woke people.

By the woke phenomenon, woke attitudes, and woke culture I mean popular political activism and cultural politics that leans on intersectional pseudoscience on discrimination and marginalization. Woke people were originally proud of the term, which originates in the African American tradition and refers to the idea of wakening to see the social reality and its mechanisms of oppression (wake, woke, waken). Lately, however, the use of the term has been branded by intersectional scholarship as a mere conservative strategy to attack its advocates. Now the claim is that discrimination debates have nothing to do with wokeism.

The strategy is both simple and cunning: With the woke people’s understanding that all relevant social debate and research can only be about discrimination they wish to normalize discrimination as the central topic of all social studies, meaning that all else is irrelevantly conservative-minded, antiscientific thinking.

They can, hence, brand their critics as value conservatives, racists, chauvinists, or representatives of the extreme right, if not Neo-Nazis—all opposing the new intersectional social science paradigm. Simultaneously, the humanities would also be redefined as mere minority and marginalization research.

In intersectional research articles members of fully legal right-wing political parties are occasionally branded as advocates of scientifically erroneous thinking.² This is no better argument than the general right-wing talk of “cultural Marxism” or “leftist Green ideology” with no indication what the terms, in fact, would mean. Insofar as even traditional liberals are today occasionally viewed as mere “wokes” by the ultraconservatives, one can read this book as addressed from a liberal “woke” to all other wokes.

In a research text mere branding is never an argument. Even right-wing populism must be proven scientifically or argumentatively inappropriate when it is claimed to be so. We are all opinionated, but the most elemental methodological rules are not a matter of opinion—not even in social sciences and the humanities.

It is somewhat surprising that today, for example in France and in the United States, people calling for genuinely transparent merit-based university recruiting systems tend to come from far-right organizations, as if meriting a research job should be somehow a right-wing phenomenon and not simply the result of one’s hard work in the field of research in question. In Finland we still have a fully merit-based recruiting (and student selection) university system, which hardly makes the country—known as one of the social democracies of the European Nordic welfare state model—racist or neofascist.

As for defining terms, let me finally bring up the rich tradition of transnationalism and its various modes as interdisciplinary transborder studies, cross-border-studies, transgender studies, and the like. This subfield of cultural studies focuses on transitional cultural positioning and action and tends to find there only colonial stigmas or problems caused by one or another hegemonic form of oppression, while usually ignoring cultural differences as in any way explanatory or interesting in themselves. When the fundamental interest is in various transcultural forms of interaction or in finding similarities between different cultural groups, the actual cultural

differences—which originally were to be explained and compared with each other—easily vanish from sight altogether.

Cross-border and transgender studies have their place, but once they are turned into the central approach of the entire field of cultural studies, the field is in danger losing its grip on its most fundamental methodological premise, which was to be capable of explaining cultural differences as important and even valuable themselves. The concept of multiculturalism itself is at stake here. Ignoring boundaries as important is a dangerous development in current academic cultural studies. It results in research that presumes its own results.

SYMPTOMS OF THE PROBLEM

Intersectionality has spread everywhere within the humanities and the social studies. There are intersectional feminist studies, colonial studies, identity studies, hegemonic masculinity studies as well as intersectional sociology and history writing.

The concept of intersectionality was born in the U.S. and developed mainly there. The central whiteness paradigm of intersectionality does not so much aim to explain the world as to change it. This is how historian Peter Kolchin describes the early whiteness studies:

Whiteness studies authors manifest a wide variety of approaches. In many of the disciplines outside history, prescriptive policy goals assume a central position; writing on whiteness in education, for example, Nelson M. Rodriguez calls for the creation of “‘pedagogies of whiteness’ as a counterhegemonic act” predicated on the need to “refigure whiteness in antiracist, antihomophobic, and antisexist ways.”³

At least in history and pedagogical studies, the intersectional whiteness studies are thus mainly performed for the emancipatory purposes of antiracism, queer studies, and women’s studies. The suggestion in the quotation regarding the purpose to “refigure whiteness” tells us what is meant by the term to begin with:

Whiteness itself appears to represent racist, homophobic, and sexist attitudes toward other people.

“White privilege,” as American sociologist Teresa Guess argues, “can be conceptualized as properties or characteristics of the structuration of ‘race’ relations,” because it is the white human being who defines oneself “in opposition to inferior others.”⁴ Among pedagogies the inference drawn from this premise is that the traditional colorblindness advocated in schools has “negative consequences” for “interracial interaction.”⁵

Intersectionality has spread from the United States across the world and to Finnish academia as well. All racial “definitions are entangled with other markers of relative inferiority and superiority, such as being Nordic or European,” proclaims a group of researchers from the University of Helsinki adding that, “as a Nordic nation, this ideology also applies to Finland.”⁶ Even our social service administrators, advises another scholar, should learn to consider their own “whiteness as an undeserved and [eventually] consciously acknowledged privilege.”⁷

From the viewpoint of the whiteness paradigm everything has been done wrong thus far, given that even Finland’s excellent international rankings in social equality only “serve to further the notion of homogeneity and the hegemony of whiteness in defining Finnishness.”⁸ The better social policies you advocate as a white Finn, the more hegemonic you become.

Having read intersectional social research texts for two years, I have yet to find an explanation for why exactly the white person’s identity is constructed in juxtaposition to “inferior others.”⁹ How did this universalized white human being know all others to be inferior to itself? Given that President Barack Obama could represent mere “white power in black face,” whiteness appears to be an extrahistorically used euphemism for all well-to-do people across the world.¹⁰ Most conspicuously, intersectionality seems oddly unconcerned about any actual political power structures in Canada, China, Columbia, Dubai, Norway, Pakistan, or in any other country. Only hegemonic whiteness is of interest.

In her legendary article that introduced the concept of intersectionality, “Demarginalizing the Intersection” (1989), Kimberle Crenshaw, in order to prove the contempt for black

women in American society in the 1980s drew on sources as distant as court records from 1918.¹¹ Such a use of historical material appears rather to ignore the very notion of “historical” than deal with it. In any historical sense, Americans, just like Europeans, and the rest of the world, lived in an entirely different social reality in 1989 from that of the colonial era of 1918.

During the period from 1918 to 1989 American women were enfranchised, labor unions were recognized, the first public pension systems and welfare services were created, penicillin was discovered, quantum mechanics appeared, Nazi-Germany was destroyed, the atom bomb was invented, colonized nations won independence, and the 1960s Civil Rights Movement changed the entire American legal and intellectual landscape.

Most notably, and contrary to what intersectional colonial studies would let us believe, for 100 years no Western scientist has believed in any 18th-century race theories. A particular intersectional tenet of “racialization,” however, holds that white people are still in the possession of “the power to define the terms of racialized others’ existence.”¹² What can be even meant by the notion of white people defining the terms of the very existence of all other people on earth?

The new colonial history school can explain almost anything as a consequence of this phenomenon called racialization. An American, confessedly intersectional scholar tells us, for example, that

... when a Black person attacks an Asian person, the encounter is fueled perhaps by racism, but very specifically by white supremacy. White supremacy does not require a white person to perpetuate it.¹³

In other words, the intersectional research method would allow us to consider the murder or mutilation of an Asian American by an African American as primarily motivated by white people’s hideous supremacy as we find it embedded in our “white” Western culture, social structures, uses of language, ways of reasoning, and even in our subconscious ways of thinking—all thanks to the hundreds of years of Western colonialism.

Alongside the oppression of black people in America white supremacy also explains African Americans' own hate crimes. As we will see, it also explains homophobia, misogyny, the hundreds of years of suppression of indigenous peoples, the general disregard of the disabled, the sick, and the poor. When one finds a term that covers—as the Christian concept of original sin once did—all human mistakes and failures, one should ask whether the term can explain anything in particular.¹⁴

Intersectional scholars often insist that they do not aim to accuse individual white persons, but only certain discriminatory social constructions that our constant “production of whiteness” (even in general school education) upholds. People, both white and of other skin colors, however, tend to get emotional when encountering such new scientific “truths” that the whiteness studies produce.

In the fall of 2019, Hollywood star Rosanna Arquette confessed to her inborn inadequacy in the new, thoroughly racialized, progressive discussion culture by tweeting thus: “I’m sorry I was born white and privileged. It disgusts me.” In 2021, a Helsinki University scholar noted that for many Finns too, it “may appear painful to acknowledge their own privileged position as white.”¹⁵

It gets all the more complicated when considering how emotionally alert intersectional scholarship would require us all to become. A British intersectional feminist group thought it inappropriate to use the old phrase “this is so lame!” because of the emotions such an expression might raise among the disabled.¹⁶

The intersectionality-oriented research abounds with talk about “effects” and “impacts” of all kinds of unintentional sins that our colonial past has made white people guilty of in their everyday language. Intersectional scholars may also cling to the apparent distinction between the speaker’s intentions and the actual impacts so as to analyze “offensive effects.”¹⁷ Let us briefly consider what kind of impacts and effects intersectionality and woke-speech themselves have had in the U.S. and in Finland.

In 2020, white American female author, Alexandra Duncan, “cancelled” her fictive novel written from the perspective of a black woman once she was awakened to her lapse into cultural appropriation. She noted being “deeply ashamed to have made a mistake of this magnitude.” Should we, hence, also ban, for example,

Mika Waltari's novel *Sinuhe* (filmed as *The Egyptian* by Michael Curtiz, 1954), given that the author never even visited Egypt? Or, what should we think of Lew Wallace writing *Ben Hur* in New Mexico in the 1880s with hardly any respect for ancient Roman gods and culture (even if the novel was blessed by Pope Leo XIII)?

Even book burning is again in fashion. In the fall of 2021, in an Ontario indigenous people's "reconciliation" operation, over 5,000 volumes of allegedly hurtful material were publicly burned, as if nothing had been learned from Nazi-Germany's infamous 1930s book burnings. Among the burned material were old studies of Indian cultures. Even Lucky Luke, Asterix, and Tintin comic books were destroyed in a similar fashion.¹⁸ More recently Dr. Seuss's world-famous children's books have also been proclaimed as failing in what proper "racialization" of everyone around us would truly require.¹⁹ Margaret Atwood, a Canadian author formerly known for her feminism, has been lately treated as one of the archenemies of intersectional feminism.

Publishing houses have been likewise awakened to the new woke sensitivity. Even novels, such as old James Bond books and Agatha Christie's murder mysteries are openly censured and re-edited for the taste of the newly sensitive readers, with the Disney company recently refusing to republish some of Don Rosa's famous Donald Duck comics.²⁰ Such classic authors as Joseph Conrad and Rudyard Kipling were simply removed from a Roald Dahl's children's book and replaced by Jane Austen and John Steinbeck.²¹

Does an author possess any copyright for books and articles published in her/his name any more? How is it possible that in such different countries as Finland and the United States cultural studies scholars praise such developments? It is difficult to speak of the role of traditional media in all this, given that established newspapers publish opinion pieces in which white people's getting tanned on the beaches is questioned as cultural appropriation.²²

Similar questions can be asked of the fashionable American hatred for old statues. Once the Confederate statues had become the target of progressives, it took only a few years to realize the unethical nature of the entire American past, which led to also toppling the statues of Columbus, Theodore Roosevelt, and Thomas

Jefferson, and eventually questioning the ethics of schools named after Abraham Lincoln.

What is a cultural landscape without its history, be it bad or good? Instead of admiring or condemning imperialist-era statues, one might just ruminate on why imperialism was once upon a time promoted as a progressive thing. Why would our multicultural ideals not encourage us to understand our own past just as they encourage us to understand other cultures alien to our own?

An illuminating example of the fashionable self-cancelling is what happened to a Canadian business association in Church-Wellesley Village, a gay-oriented community in Toronto. In 2005 the association had promoted a statue for a famous 19th-century, homosexual businessman Alexander Wood. In 2021 the association demanded toppling its statue, as it had been revealed that Wood had financed a white-run Indian school, even if at the local natives' own request. Also in Toronto, Nadia Murad, who had been held prisoner by Islamic fundamentalists, was prevented from speaking because of the feared Islamophobic reactions.²³

The most striking impact intersectionality has had relates to its obsession with considering universities as the cradle of racist attitudes among us. As (African American) Professor of Linguistics John McWhorter tells us:

At one meeting at Northwestern University's law school in 2020, professors actually stood up and ritually denounced themselves as not only harboring privilege but as being outright racists.²⁴

This is how two Harvard University professors describe the intersectional censorship mentality in American universities today:

between 2014 and 2022 there were 877 attempts to punish scholars for expression that is, or in public contexts would be, protected by the First Amendment. Sixty percent resulted in actual sanctions, including 114 incidents of censorship and 156 firings (44 of them tenured professors)—more than during the McCarthy era. Worse, for every scholar who is punished, many

more self-censor, knowing they could be next. It's no better for the students, a majority of whom say that the campus climate prevents them from saying things they believe.²⁵

Has the United States begun to resemble itself in the days of McCarthyism in the 1950s, although the oppressors today tend to come from the left-wing of the political spectrum rather than from the right?

I was recently reprimanded by a student at the University of Helsinki for criticizing sociologist Teresa Guess's article as a white, Finnish male. In fact, I had no idea that Guess was an African American woman when I originally wrote my critique. The student's accusation embodied the classic *ad hominem* fallacy—the idea that a given argument strengthens or weakens according to who offers it.

I am getting used to being treated this way. Another student, alarmed at the rise of systematic, legal racial segregation across the South and elsewhere after the Civil War, adamantly claimed in her term paper that slavery was not, in fact, abolished in 1865 in the United States. She fell for such an alternative fact because of her horror about what she could not understand at all, beginning with the fact that slavery and racial segregation are entirely different forms of oppression.

One wonders whether students interested in any such concepts as “hegemonic whiteness” should not first get to know the purposes of which such oppressive white “power structures” as capitalism and modern, majoritarian democracy with individual human rights initially evolved.²⁶ A student of mine, who had just written an excellent B.A. thesis on a Beyoncé music video, had no clue of what is the difference between unicameral and bicameral legislatures. Both are in use even in the United States.

WHY THE TWO COUNTRIES?

The title of the book includes two countries, Finland and the United States. In order to grasp the fundamental problem of intersectionality and its transcultural approach to all kinds of discrimination, one needs to examine the theory in concrete social contexts. And in order to grasp how fundamentally social contexts vary among us all, it is

necessary to think of at least two in comparison to each other. This approach will help the reader to see that whiteness studies scholars are not interested in comparison of social contexts, which leads one wonder if they are, in fact, interested in concrete social problems to begin with.

I am a Finnish American Studies expert, a historian by education, and while intersectionality is an international academic trend, it is most convenient to focus on comparisons between only these two, very different Western countries. Finland is known as a Nordic welfare state or social democracy (alongside Iceland, Norway, Sweden, and Denmark), while the United States is the leading capitalist power in the world and the place where intersectionality itself was born.

One reason to choose these two (very different) Western countries is that Finnish academic culture has adopted American intersectionality with astonishing speed. Another reason is that, while intersectionality likes to assume a universal character, it is a critical approach only to Western culture and civilization because of its interests in all minority cultures as mere victims of Western colonialism rather than in any differences among Western countries themselves.

It is American national history and the country's now abhorrently grown social and intellectual divisions that explain the popularity of the intersectional paradigm about a pervasive masculine white supremacy as the general explanation for the entire world today. As for grasping the actual differences between American and Finnish attitudes to social disturbances and ethnic tensions, history explains a lot.

The British American colonies and the United States harbored African slavery over 250 years from 1619 onwards, which was followed by 100 years of legal racial segregation until the revolutionary social changes in the 1960s. Moreover, the Americans have conquered their land from Native Americans and Mexicans, while not avoiding various forms of suppression of Asian and European immigrants to the country at the turn of the 20th century, not to mention the latest debates about immigration from Latin America.

At the turn of the 20th century Finland had been the Grand Duchy of Russia for approximately 100 years, with a long history as part of Sweden before that. Finns still lived in the traditional society of orders where all people were treated as members of their own order only, meaning that the landless poor were to stay so totally regardless of their ethnicity—given that they all were white by skin color. Approximately 70 percent of the adult population (not owning land as independent farmers or belonging to the orders of the bourgeoisie, the clergy, or the nobility) were deprived of any political rights until the year 1906. The last law regarding purely ethnic distinctions, however, the law on Jewish ethnicity was repealed in December 1917, only weeks after Finland won its independence.²⁷ In the United States, as noted, racial segregation was repealed only during the 1960s.

Today, both countries enjoy considerable wealth. The GDP (gross domestic production) of the United States is approximately 25 percent higher than that of Finland, whereas life expectancy in Finland is 3 years higher than in the U.S.. Both are characteristically Western countries with democratic constitutions, capitalist economies, and high-tech industries. Both are also ethnically divergent, for even in Finland the number of people with immigrant background has risen to an approximate 9 percent of the entire population since the early 1990s.

As with the Native Americans in the United States, so in Finland a small indigenous group of Sami people (approximate 0,2 percent of the entire population) were somewhat brutally suppressed during the early decades of independence. Similarly, a small Romani minority (also approximate 0,2 percent) has experienced racism regardless of the equality of all citizens by law.

Other differences between the countries are equally striking. One may begin by noting that the entire population of Finland is approximately the same as of South Carolina (at 5,1 million), the geographical size of the country is close to that of New Mexico at 121,591 sq mi, while its climate resembles that of Minnesota. Most importantly, in contrast to the United States, Finland is one of the Nordic welfare states with state-guaranteed universal healthcare, an extensive social security system, free university education, and a public pension system as well as approximately 60 percent of hired

labor belonging to labor unions as compared to the U.S. with only 11 percent.

We will return to these differences, most of which remain obscure not only to the larger public, but to most academics (in both countries) as well. When it comes to what is often called social justice, the reader may find my comparisons of the two countries heavily biased in favor of Finland. Any misinterpretations of my mainly statistical source material in this respect are of course open to critical scrutiny by the reader.

Given the remarkable differences between the sociological profiles of the two countries it may appear surprising that intersectionality has become almost as deeply embedded in Finnish academic life as it is in the U.S. today. To be sure, it has gathered only scarce media attention in Finland and largely remained invisible for the greater public. Intersectionality has, in a sense, intruded into Finland silently—first into the Finnish artistic circles, then university departments of education, the humanities, and social sciences, and eventually into large sections of the Finnish governmental administration.

THE NEW TERMINOLOGY

Academically speaking, intersectionality has provided a number of new meanings to terms which in everyday language did not earlier require any special theoretical framework, such as race, racism, marginalization, and discrimination. All these terms intersectional scholars have defined anew, based on their own theoretical view of masculine, white supremacy as an oppressive social construction that has molded not only our social structures but our mental structures as well.

For example, racism among intersectional scholars does not refer to any prejudiced attitude based on the color of skin, but as something possible for white people only. Similarly, the term “race” itself appears in intersectional scholarship as a product of white slaveowners’ racial theories of the 18th century, as if studying ethnic differences has never had any genetic basis to begin with, also neglecting the fact that no scientist has believed in those ancient racial theories for the last 100 years. As we will see later, the most important conclusion about intersectionality is that whiteness itself is

essentially a socially (even if only academically) constructed concept with no explanatory power about anything in the modern world.

By analyzing intersectionality's specific way of using sociopolitical and psychological concepts, this volume will prove by the means of simple content analysis of intersectional research texts that intersectional scholarship is incapable of providing any rational basis for its theoretical presumptions, not to speak of being capable of proving such presumptions empirically.

The intersectional scholars' response to any theoretical or practical critique of intersectionality itself tends to consist of jargon about white supremacy just modifying its own "discourses of whiteness" in order to "remain dominant" due to the the "fact" that "the flexibility and relative invisibility of whiteness are central to its normalization."²⁸ In sum, critique only embodies the very fabric of those oppressive social constructions that intersectionality has itself called into existence. In fact, the theoretical fortress of intersectionality offers no defense against any serious empirical challenges.

This book is dedicated to proving the utter conceptual and empirical hollowness of that academic fortress. Traditional liberalism has always embraced not only individuality but also a competitive social order, which is the actual target of intersectional attack on Western, liberalism in general—regardless of how ethnic, gender, and social differences have affected each of us in different historical eras and situations. Whiteness, as will be shown, can be viewed as a social construction only to the extent that the intersectional paradigm manages to make people believe in its existence. Methodology is the decisive issue here.

The first chapter of the book will bring up the most striking problems of intersectional thought patterns and particularly their disturbing way of handling the concept of identity in the context of Western individualism. The second chapter explores the birth of whiteness and white supremacy as extrahistorically derived concepts and their pejorative use—also providing an explanation of what is problematic in the concept of whiteness itself.

The third chapter offers a theoretical summary of intersectional concepts and of the lack of empirical proof for the intersectional definitions of whiteness. The fourth chapter is

dedicated to clarifying why one must see not only colonialism but also the Enlightenment with its empirical, scientific ideals as part of the legacy of Western history—in order to grasp what historical thinking is all about, and why adequate historical thinking is necessary for a civilization such as ours.

EDITORIAL REMARKS AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Let me emphasize that a critical attitude toward intersectional whiteness studies does not imply in any way that racial prejudices are not to be considered a serious problem in Western countries (as in all other countries) or that racism should not be objected to wherever we encounter it. Neither does this critical attitude mean that advocating the cause of ethnic and all other minorities is not valuable as such. It is.

Yet, with regard to academic study of discrimination and marginalization, studies before intersectionality arrived on the scene appear a good deal more valid in terms of research methodology. The simple reason is that they do not carry the twisted whiteness paradigm on their back. Instead, such “traditional” studies explore ethnic and gender issues in terms of actual equality rather than accusing some mysteriously “white” group of privileged people for each and every social problem on earth.

This book is based on my earlier monograph in Finnish, *Intersektionaalista vai “valkoista” ylivaltaa?*, although heavily re-edited, abridged, and updated. All translations from Finnish sources to English are made by the author unless otherwise indicated in the notes.

Methodologically this study consists of textual analysis (content analysis) of a number of intersectionality-oriented scholarly articles and books published in Finland and in the U.S. Given that we are dealing with an international academic fashion, I have occasionally used material by scholars from Africa, Australia, Canada, and a variety of European countries.

Critical literature on intersectionality has been mostly excluded, although some critical newspaper articles have been used. The only woke-critical academic study used is John McWhorter’s *Woke Racism* (2021), even if it only occasionally addresses intersectionality itself. The purpose is not to provide a literature

summary on the topic, but to focus on the actual scientific or pseudoscientific argumentation that intersectional scholars themselves use.

Autobiographical notes do not belong to a normal research text, but I was here forced to resort to a few such notes to illuminate certain tenets of intersectional “intersections” themselves—in all their absurdity. Intersectional whiteness studies scholars use autobiographical material customarily. I also use repetition whenever the context appears to call for it in the name of a clear line of argumentation. Intersectionality itself is based on repeating its central accusation of white people’s privileged position.

I express my gratitude to the experts who read the original manuscript in full, including Professor Mikko Saikku of the University of Helsinki and two anonymous reviewers provided by the Finnish Methodology Society. I also thank the group of scholars and friends reading and offering their comments on certain subchapters or extracts of the original manuscript, such as Eveliina Heino, Atte Komonen, Niina Koskipää, Allan Megill, and Janne Metsänheimo. For providing additional source material I express my thanks to Eveliina Heino, Marjo Kuronen, and Lena Näre. For proofreading this English version, I wish to thank, once again, my old friend Kenny Marotta from Virginia, and for the title of the book, Arthur Scherr from New York.

The book consists of critical remarks on intersectional scholarly texts, but I wish to emphasize here that my critique does not concern individual persons behind those texts. Most often the offered criticism does not apply to entire articles or books, but only to some specific arguments in them.

I have dedicated the book to some of my most important “others,” my former students in three different Finnish universities.

In Tikkurila, 2024,
the author

I. Intersectional Equality

WHAT IS INTERSECTIONALITY?

The thesis of this book is that, despite its nobly humanist purposes, the fashionable, new social science of intersectionality generally fails to follow any academically valid procedure of argumentation. It is invalid, because it dismisses the traditional scientific and academic concern for proper research methods.

As will be shown, with their pseudoscientific reasoning, not to mention their misunderstanding of modern historical thinking, intersectional scholars are capable of providing proofs only of their own theoretical presumptions while incapable of telling us anything new about social relations in modern society. Empirically they are capable of proving how incompletely people (beginning with Finnish schoolchildren) grasp their exotic discrimination and marginalization theories.

This chapter will provide a definition of intersectionality and explore its advocates' argumentation about omnipresent discrimination against all kinds of people by considering it in the context of Finnish (or Nordic) welfare state social structures in general. In addition, we will find out what the central concept of "intersection" means for intersectionality itself. What we must question most of all is the very presumption that there is somewhere some consistent, white culture capable of making life miserable for all those somehow excluded from it.

So, what is intersectionality? As it was invented in the United States, let us begin with American sources. This is how the Merriam-Webster dictionary defines intersectionality:

Intersectionality, noun: the complex, cumulative way in which the effects of multiple forms of discrimination (such as racism, sexism, and classism) combine, overlap,

or intersect especially in the experiences of marginalized individuals or groups.

An additional note includes a remark that “intersect” means to “cross” or “overlap,” and provides us with this insight on the theory of intersectionality:

[Kimberle] Crenshaw introduced the theory of intersectionality, the idea that when it comes to thinking about how inequalities persist, categories like gender, race, and class are best understood as overlapping and mutually constitutive rather than isolated and distinct.
— Adia Harvey Wingfield.²⁹

Based on these definitions one may already infer intersectionality’s fundamental tenet, which is to study gender, race, and class differences as “mutually constitutive,” “overlapping,” and “intersecting” rather than things to be analyzed separately, each in its specific components.

Regarding the innovative nature of intersections themselves, consider the traditional term for an American social elite, WASP (white Anglo-Saxon Protestant). Is it not conspicuously intersectional in its overlapping elements of ethnic, linguistic, and religious identities? Any suggestion that there never have been white Anglo-Saxon Protestants living in absolute poverty and filth all their lives is proven wrong by numerous histories of often illiterate American sharecroppers and tenant farmers as late as the early 20th century. Intersectionality, however, is not interested in the overlapping intersectional identity positions themselves, but in considering them as effects of oppression by white supremacy.

As Finnish intersectional scholar Eveliina Heino (University of Helsinki) summarizes the topic, intersectionality is about “multiple discrimination” (*moniperustainen syrjintä*).³⁰ A German women’s rights organization, Medica Mondiale, holds simply that “intersectional or multiple discrimination is present when a person is affected by different forms of discrimination at the same time. One form can impact on another and they can even amplify each other.”³¹

In these statements, the fundamental methodological problem is already present. In the intersectional approach, different forms and instances of discrimination (never mere marginalization) should all be examined together rather than be analyzed separately, as if we knew beforehand that they must be connected, whether or not they, in fact, are. Traditionally, any analysis demands distinguishing different aspects of a given phenomenon so that those aspects can be seen in their cause-and-effect relations. Otherwise, one risks confusing a cause and an effect with one another.

This is how, in turn, Finnish sociology Professor Lena Näre of University of Helsinki explains intersectionality: “Put simply, by the concept and the theory of intersectionality we refer to an empirical analysis of the multiple and coincidental (simultaneous) character of society’s discriminatory structures and forms of discrimination.”³² In other words, the allegedly foreknown simultaneous effects of various forms of such structures must also be explored simultaneously and together—contrary to what traditional analysis would allow.

Hence, the paradigmatic point of departure in intersectional research work is to study marginalization through “discriminatory structures and forms” by focusing “on institutional and ideological practices that maintain white privilege.”³³ The fundamental assumption is that all marginalization is, by definition, an effect of discrimination of some sort and that the cause of every social problem is already known: White people enjoy undeserved privileges as compared to all other ethnic groups and are therefore the main culprits of all discrimination in the world.

This “white-skin privilege,” claims American scholar Teresa Guess, “can be conceptualized as properties or characteristics of the structuration of ‘race’ relations.”³⁴ Marginalization is thus seen via specific social structures, which all, in essence, attest to discrimination by a hideous “Western, white supremacy.”³⁵ Such a research paradigm, in fact, changes the entire field of marginalization studies. Let us take intersectional scholars at their own words as how this is supposed to be achieved.

How should one, first of all, grasp the mysterious concept of white supremacy itself? Finnish scholar Minna Seikkula, who studies both openly racist and “ordinary whiteness,” notes that whiteness itself is “both a social structure and an embodied position within” an

“overlapping structure” that shapes a certain “racialized order dominated by whiteness.” Within such a “racialized” social order we need to “comprehend extreme and ordinary whiteness as interrelated parts of the same power-structure.”³⁶

In other words, Americans, Finns, Swedish, French, and all other Westerners live under (and are part of) a power structure, which can be characterized, in the view of intersectionality, as racist and probably fascist just as well as liberal democratic. No Western society is to be considered innocent. A group of University of Helsinki scholars insist, given that all “racial definitions are entangled with other markers of relative inferiority and superiority, such as being Nordic or European” that this “ideology also applies to Finland.”³⁷

Theoretically, the whiteness paradigm rests on the conception of “white fragility” formulated by the American expert on multicultural education, Robin DiAngelo. In summary her thesis is this: Because of our colonial past, racist white supremacy is so deeply rooted in our social history, language, and ultimately our way of thinking that white people do not perceive it in their everyday life. They still “produce whiteness” even through their everyday school education. The magnitude of the problem is conveyed in such off-hand remarks by intersectional scholarship as that even “the predominant Western conception of sexuality in itself includes racism.”³⁸

The unfortunate psychological trait of “white fragility” refers to white people’s general refusal to admit their inherent racism. For this ailment DiAngelo recommends therapy services for all white people not yet cured of their fragility. White persons should be educated in identifying their own “whiteness as undeserved and [finally] consciously acknowledged privilege.”³⁹

To grasp how deep a psychological injury we are dealing with, let us take a look at the recipe for cure by British-Australian scholar Sara Ahmed as cited in a Finnish doctoral thesis by Tobias Pötzsch:

To turn towards whiteness is to turn towards and away from those bodies who have been afforded agency and mobility by such privilege. In other words, the task for white subjects would be to stay implicated in what they

critique, but in turning towards their role and responsibility [...] to turn away from themselves, and towards others.⁴⁰

According to intersectionality, even managing to break out from this traumatic state serves only to prove the pathological character of white fragility itself. How is this achieved in practice so that the intersectional community can be confirmed of its authenticity? Apparently, the only empirical proof of the cure is the former patient's becoming accusatory of all those white persons who have not yet confessed their inborn fragility. The theory is waterproof in its characteristically pseudoscientific way.

Deep down, this new race theory of whiteness is grounded on the concept of hegemonic power. This hegemony, in turn, regularly forms the basis for general, but never specific critique of international capitalism and the equally obscure "power relations of racism and social inequalities."⁴¹ The perspective is enthrallingly simple and brilliant in its own narrowness as it pertains to the concept of power itself.

One might consider power to be always negotiable or at least disputable, as ceaseless wars, riots, family arguments, and the like throughout human history appear to validate. Yet according to intersectionality, in the hands of white people power suddenly appears, as if by definition, exclusively hegemonic in character.

Even the term racism is newly defined by intersectional scholarship. Reverse racism is impossible, we are told by a Canadian group of intersectional scholars, because "stereotypes about white people" should be "considered racial prejudice, not racism."⁴² The grounds for adopting this special meaning for racism are of crucial importance for understanding the intersectional approach to both the modern world and history.

The whiteness paradigm rests on a specific reading of world history in which no other developments are viewed as meaningful except "the systemic relationship to power ... rooted in colonialism" from the 17th to the early 20th century. The various forms and manifestations of this colonialism-rooted "systemic relationship to power," in turn, "continue to reproduce and privilege whiteness" today. It hence guarantees for the whites "the power to define the

terms of racialized others' existence."⁴³ In sum, white people alone determine the terms of the very existence of themselves as well as all the rest of humankind.

The fundamental historical mistake of the new race theory is the idea that because the capitalist elite has been white in skin color throughout the early modern and modern eras of world history, power itself can be deemed mere white hegemony. Here we have revealed the basis for the abovementioned claim that an African American's aggression toward an Asian American even today is actually motivated by white supremacy, which "does not require a white person to perpetuate it."⁴⁴

In other words, intersectionality holds that African Americans' suffering and even their own hate crimes result from white supremacy. As we will shortly see, the same explanation applies to the sufferings of gender, sexual, and ethnic minorities as well as to the discrimination experienced by the disabled, the poor, and the elderly.

One of the victims of this twisted academic simplicity is history. Is whiteness simply a byword for elitism anywhere, anytime? If it is not, what is the world historical thesis of intersectionality regarding earlier ethnic prejudices? Even ancient Egyptians distinguished themselves from pale "Libyans" and black "Nubians." Are we to think that the Egyptian rule over their neighboring peoples in today's Palestine, Syria, Libya, and Sudan included no hierarchical power relations?⁴⁵

Or, what should one think of the Comanche empire during the heyday of the Euro-American imperialist era? This empire in northern Texas reached huge areas in Coahuila, New Mexico, and Oklahoma until the early 1870s with tens of thousands of other native Americans, Mexicans, and white Texans subjected to its power in varying degrees.⁴⁶ The Japanese, of course, busied themselves in building an empire of their own before and during WWII.

In sum, grasping the fundamental mistake of the intersectional approach to the world, to history, and to world affairs requires understanding of what power is and what is historical and what extra-historical about it to begin with. Let us keep in mind that history knows of no human society (no matter of what color) without some kind of power structures.

What one practically never finds in intersectionality-oriented historical accounts, are the gradual independence process of all developing countries over 70 years ago, the ending of racial segregation in the U.S. approximately 60 years ago, the huge advances in women's situation in each and every Western country for the last 100 years, and the revolutionary changes of the situation of sexual minorities during the last 20 years.

Since the beginning of early-modern and modern colonialisms approximately 500 years ago, economic prosperity has grown tenfold for every human being on earth (even with the world population explosion) and life expectancy has risen by dozens of years. In sum, the world has been undergoing huge changes, and, in many respects, for the better.⁴⁷

With intersectionality, the very term “equality” has turned problematic. According to the traditional understanding of equality and equity, the latter refers to concrete, positive achievements in equality by sociopolitical means. Equality, hence, generally refers (as it should) to our equality as individuals, not as members of our various ethnic, local, or professional groups—no matter how important a given group should be to an individual's personal identity. Even the Finnish constitution speaks of “the rights of individuals,” and holds that also “children shall be treated equally and as individuals.”⁴⁸

Hence, at least before intersectionality, marginalization referred simply to a given individual's underperformance in competitive job markets, or to one's inability—for reasons of health, particular disability, family issues, love relationships, and such—to utilize available educational resources or political possibilities.

In modern Western societies such reasons for an individual's marginalization hardly ever follow from specific sociopolitical structures. Even if they did so, examining different social structures is precisely what intersectional scholarship deliberately abstains from doing. The reason is, as we will see later on, that white supremacy in itself appears to explain everything worth explicating about deprivation of any kind. It serves as a kind of a superstructure of all imaginable sociopolitical and other structures, given that in intersectionality all structures appear, as if by definition, structures of discrimination.

Intersectional scholars sometimes insist that they do not accuse individual white persons, but the social constructions of whiteness. Nevertheless, they regularly find the hideous whiteness originating in a specifically given (even if unconsciously adopted) mental structuration of individual white people. Otherwise, they could not cling to the central concept of the whiteness paradigm itself, namely “white fragility”—the notion of white people’s inborn reformatory duty to perceive their own “whiteness as undeserved and acknowledged privilege.”⁴⁹ The only fascinating feature of the whiteness theory is this inherent contradiction between its overly simplistic explanation of the entire modern world order and its attempts to cover up the totalitarian character of the explanation itself.

In fact, intersectional scholarship abounds in condescending, if not outright prejudiced remarks about white people. An assistant professor (an expert in feminist meaning-making) called Canadian author Margaret Atwood a “shitty white woman.”⁵⁰ Another scholar opined that America would not be so American “without its white people,” but “it would be something better.”⁵¹ A third one is convinced that “white identity defines itself in opposition to inferior others,” as if white people would be, by definition, incapable of individual self-determination.⁵²

The curse of whiteness reaches everyone not openly opposing it. Some American “progressives” felt free to assert that President Obama was only “a black face on the same old white supremacy,” while others accused him of being “not ‘really’ Black or African American,” which made him appear “promotable within the ‘white power structure.’”⁵³

Professor Ibram X. Kendi once proclaimed that even a black person opposing his antiracist ideology, while occupying a politically influential position, is, indeed, a racist.⁵⁴ In other words, although white skin color automatically makes one a privileged person, the case of an African American is to be given specific consideration in the light of the person’s positioning in society. If this ideology—in which anyone resisting Kendi’s critical race theory is a racist—is not prejudiced itself, what is?

Let me emphasize that none of this has anything to do with the basic attempt at objectivity in no matter how innovative scientific

thought. In the humanities and social sciences there is no way to verify an absolutely objective research perspective on often interpretative research results. Neither has traditional methodological thinking claimed such a possibility—at least for the last 50 years or so. This is why social scientists, historians, linguistic scholars, and others keep on talking, writing, discussing, and debating about which components of each research report are scientifically provable, which are mistaken, and which mere pipedreams of how things should be in our imperfect world.

In fact, any large-scale marginalization is a symptom of a social policy failure. To grasp, for example, American social reality today, one does not need to resort to critical race theory or to begin with the 19th-century atrocities of African slavery. A well-done historical study of American social politics during the last 60 years suffices to explain what has gone wrong. In Finland, no one would imagine that the allocation of national welfare benefits could become more equitable by taking into consideration what the Finnish society of orders looked like at the turn of the 20th century (when 70 percent of all Finns still remained disenfranchised).

Some American sociopolitical innovations have landed in Finland during the last two decades, most conspicuously the idea of affirmative action. It has a role to play in equality policies, but it is always worth considering what it can help us to achieve. At least, focusing on affirmative action policies in university admissions and recruiting practices appears wrongheaded as long as the national elementary and high school system remains so qualitatively diversified as it currently is in the United States.

At Finnish universities admission qualifications are still exclusively merit-based. Whether the focus is where it should be, namely on the lowest levels of primary education and on children's welfare, the Finnish law on equity or the Non-discrimination Act (2014) notes only that any special treatment of an ethnic minority must be "proportioned."⁵⁵

There have already been suggestions to organize distinct black parent meetings in California schools. When the topic of identity is discussed in the classroom it is sometime recommended for children of different ethnic background to meet in their own ethnic groups in order to "clarify that the goal is not to be

‘colorblind.’”⁵⁶ Serious suggestions have been made to change the introductory American history course for schoolchildren into a “Race and Gender in American History” course.⁵⁷ Do we really wish to embrace such universal standards of racial segregation, even if reversed racial segregation?

In fact, marginalization is an economic and social burden for both its victims and the entire rest of society. It causes problems for all social life from child protection services to national legislative action and economics.

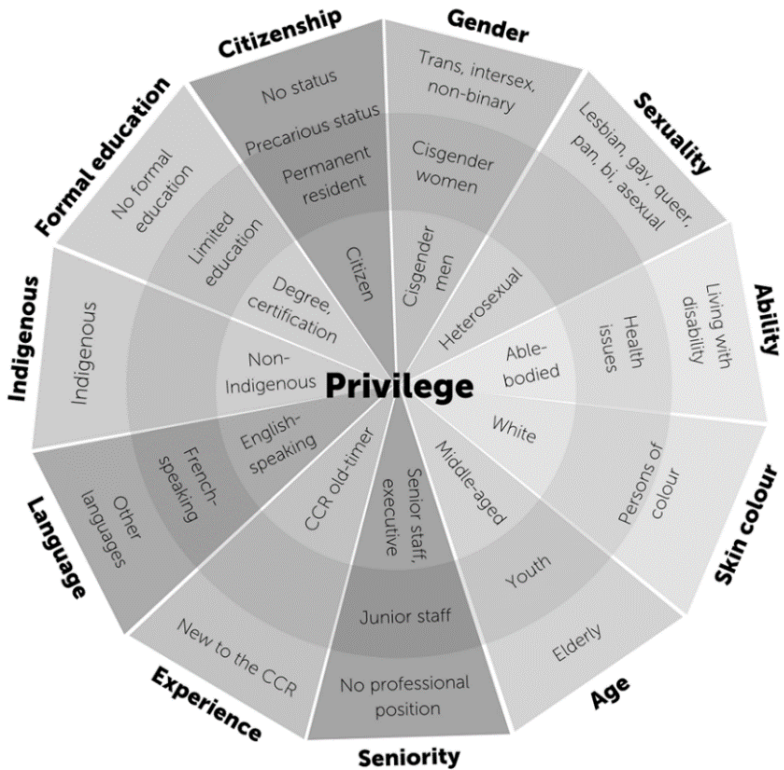
In Finland the problems of discrimination and marginalization have been addressed with a huge network of social security services, free healthcare, free university education, and with other such benefits as well as with fair job market regulations regarding decent wages, 4-week paid vacations, and the like agreements between the labor unions and the employer organizations. None of the dozens of those social benefits are built upon class or ethnic differences, but solely on the proven, individual need for help.

Strangely enough, in none of the texts even by Finnish intersectional scholars—probably due to the basics of their thinking having derived from Anglo-Saxon sources—have I found a trace of an analysis of the logic of the Nordic welfare system as compared to, for example, that of the United States.

THE WHEEL OF PRIVILEGE

Keeping to the mode of taking intersectional scholars at their words, lets us think of power relations, a concept often brought forth by them. As noted earlier, whiteness studies scholars hold that power is inevitably hegemonic only in the hands of white people. Because of its sole interest in discrimination against minorities intersectionality tends to understand even democratic power structures as similarly hegemonic in character.

Modern democratic political systems, worldwide economic regulation, the control of weapons of mass destruction, international cooperation in general, and national social politics could never function without some power structures. In this respect, the intersectional understanding of the very concept of power as a mere synonym for hegemony represents a utopian rather than analytic way of thinking.



“Wheel of Privilege” by the *Canadian Council for Refugees (CCR)*.

In fact, there never was in human history a society without some power structures, because they are there to enable peaceful cooperation among people.

The intersectional scholars’ somewhat paranoid image of the concept of power itself is easily discernible in the popular Canadian “Wheel of Privilege” diagram, which they have managed to spread across the Western world as introductory material for their new approach for social studies. The diagram is widely used today even in Finnish normal schools, universities, and governmental offices.⁵⁸ The American version of the “Wheel of Privilege” is called the “Wheel of Power.” The two diagrams’ exact sameness confirms the view that

intersectional scholars across the world share the notion of power as a synonym for oppression.

What does the “Wheel of Privilege” diagram suggest about the current world order? In the center of the wheel, one finds either the term “privilege” (in the Canadian version) or “power” (in the American version). The center is obviously occupied by the rich and powerful, while all people with less wealth, power, and opportunities are thrown to the edges of the wheel on its apparently constant, although un-explicated, rotary or cyclical movement. At least, positive historical changes are hardly ever noticed in intersectional research texts, as if Western societies have remained exactly the same since the 1865 abolition of slavery in the United States.

Into the margins of this fictional wheel (its edges) are thrown a huge variety of human beings. Marginalized are all people representing ethnic minorities, indigenous people, gender or sexual minorities, the uneducated, the disabled, the unhealthy, the young with little working experience, the elderly, all those not fluent in English, and even all those not yet schooled by the publisher of the diagram, the Canadian Council for Refugees.

The close reading of the “Wheel of Privilege” diagram reveals such facts as that the healthy have more privileges and power than the sick and the poor. What new information do we gain here? Many of us know the old quip, which I learned from my Swedish schoolbook as a kid, namely that “it is better to be rich and healthy than poor and sick.”

There are number of questions to be asked about the diagram: Do people themselves actually do anything in the intersectional world? Are they deprived of the basic human right of free speech and hence rendered incapable of advocating any social reforms? Is the diagram suggesting that modern democratic social order is similar to premodern society of orders, which was based on the premise of preventing social mobility?

The very idea that ethnic minority status or sexual orientation automatically marginalizes the individual is a strange position for anyone familiar with the liberal tradition’s central notion of freedom as a guarantee for an individual’s pursuit of happiness. It is an equally strange position from the viewpoint of the Nordic welfare state model. The model itself is devised for the purpose of

reaching anyone in need of help whether concerning one's health condition, mental issues, unemployment, inadequate income, or unaffordable housing costs—including public child support, free university education, and other such benefits.

Contrary to widely spread misconceptions, the Nordic system is not based on an idea of the hardworking people doing all the work for the benefit of the poor, the sick, and the lazy. The system's fundamental purpose is to keep everyone capable of contributing to the welfare of all. This is what high productivity and the consequently high tax revenue are needed for. The system itself benefits from every human success story it manages to produce. Self-help and social mobility are basic values of the Nordic welfare model as of any form of modern, Western democracy.

By contrast, the "Wheel of Privilege" diagram's suggestion that modern society resembles the static, premodern society of orders is outright false. After the American (1776) and the French revolutions (1789) all the old regime privileges (those of the society of orders) were gradually dismissed and replaced by the ideal of every human being seeking one's own happiness as a free individual with the economic independence to choose one's own occupation and the rights of conscience and free speech.

Contrary to the society of orders, then, in the modern, democratic social order, everyone is at liberty to choose one's spouse, neighborhood, profession, political stand, and to compete for one's dream job with everyone else. No laws are supposed to restrict these fundamental individual rights. This is why marginalization in modern democracies refers to one's individual problems in controlling one's own life—be they marital problems, health issues, mental issues, permanent disabilities, inadequate level of income, or coping with one's minority status.

In the American version of the diagram, the "Wheel of Power," the center concept is not privilege, but power itself. It is this concept of power that intersectionality most stubbornly attempts to manipulate in order to prove that all the less fortunate are discriminated against by the fortunate ones, as if luck and hard work have nothing to do with our happiness on earth—with or without the current capitalist world order. No more than the Canadian version does the American "Wheel of Power" give us any hint as to

what kind of power people in the margins (on the outer edges of the wheel) are, in fact, deprived of.

Even majoritarian democracy is, of course, a power structure. But given that intersectionality is incapable of concretizing what kind of redistribution of power and wealth it would suggest to replace the current democracies of the West, let us begin from the beginning, and consider how the conception of popular sovereignty was supposed to function as the basis of social reforms in the first place.

In Western societies the goals and the means for social reform are determined in regularly held political elections in which the people alone decide the direction of any such reforms as they have been proposed by political parties or by different associations and lobbyists (of what is called civil society). Reform is what modern democratic politics is all about, and all kinds of value choices are included even beyond sheer social reforms.

For example, the Finnish government reconsiders and decides (every year anew) the level of all available social benefits, such as minimum pensions, housing allowances, public child support, and the like. But it also reconsiders (on a yearly basis) the Finnish EU policy, the general level of national taxation and its focus (usually shifting from high income taxes toward taxation on consumption), the size of the Finnish defense budget (on the rise because of our recent NATO membership), immigration policy adjustments, initiatives to increase the employment rate, and the like.

In 2022, the proportion of total Finnish public spending devoted to all social benefits was 56 percent, healthcare included.⁵⁹ By concentrating solely on the issues of marginalization in any given society, the intersectional approach automatically leaves almost half of all national public spending out of its focus, as if that other half had nothing to do with that society's overall capacity for managing and enhancing successful social policies.

As a Nordic welfare state (or social democracy) Finland has been committed ever since WWII to the battle against marginalization of all kinds. Everyone is expected to contribute to the welfare of all. It is, hence, useless today to look for the terms "socialism" or "Marxism" even in the Finnish Left Alliance (former Socialist party) political program. The party's 2022 program begins

with the statement that “a human being would naturally wish to participate with and give work to one’s fellow human beings, communities, and society,” provided only that “the pay for work covers one’s living costs.” This is, accordingly, why the “task of the social welfare system is to fill those loopholes where compensatory action is impossible for whatever reason or when the income does not suffice for decent living.”⁶⁰

Finland uses approximately 10 percent of its GDP for its free, universal health care system, which can be considered a huge investment for equity and equality among all Finns. In comparison to the American expenditure of as much as 17 percent of GDP (itself 25 percent larger than Finnish GDP) for healthcare, the Finnish healthcare system is inexpensive. Regardless of the Americans’ reliance almost solely on private sector healthcare providers and a private health insurance system, life expectancy in the U.S. is approximately 3 years lower than in “poor” Finland.⁶¹ In sum, meaningful choices can be made toward cost-efficient equality policies.

As for equity and social politics in general, let us consider how the problems of marginalization and social discrimination have been addressed before the intersectionality theory. At least in Finland, such problems have always been addressed individually. Indeed, within the classic, liberal image of humanity, the most fundamental minority position is that of any given individual, no matter how privileged or underprivileged one might be considered because of family background or other reasons.

Human rights are individual rights of every human being. Minority rights, by contrast, are fundamentally cultural rights. Identifying oneself as a Romani, a Native American, a heterosexual, a homosexual, a woman, a man, a boy, or a girl, has very little to do with what is called human rights once society has ceased to discriminate anyone on the basis of such differences—as all Western societies have. Liberal political cultures are committed to this distinction between absolute human rights and cultural values. Criticism, say, of some Muslim girls’ circumcision practices does not draw on the differences between Islamic and Christian values. It rests only on the U.N.-sanctioned, secular doctrine of individual human rights.

Even so, the liberal identity studies tradition has called for adding the principle of cultural rights to traditional human rights thought. The entire ideal of multicultural society draws on the notion of the individual's also possessing the right to one's own culture, which no one practices all alone. How would one be a French Canadian alone?

It is, nevertheless, a different thing to apply for funding for cultural projects to enliven the Sami culture in Inari than to calling for the equal treatment of everyone regardless of their ethnic or family background or sexual identity. This fundamentally important distinction intersectionality systematically ignores because of its own theoretical ambitions.

When confusing individual human rights with minority rights, one easily ends up treating the entire field of social politics as if it deals exclusively with human rights issues. This mistake is particularly wide-spread among the American left. Once social politics is construed as a judicial issue, the logical place to call for social justice is, of course, the court of law. But the court of law only reads the law as it is written, which is why it is fundamentally incapable of correcting social injustices.

While the American Supreme Court's landmark decision *Brown v. Topeka Board of Education* in 1954 definitely began the process of ending American racial segregation, the court at the time only corrected its own, earlier interpretation of the Constitution. A similarly illuminating example of the omnipresence of political deliberations across American society (as in any other Western democracy) is the Supreme Court's decision to overturn its earlier *Roe v. Wade* decision about the right to abortion in 2022.

Over recent decades, conservatives have been more successful than liberals in nominating Supreme Court justices. And every one of those justices also embraces some particular values and particular political opinions. In sum, any attempt to turn the American Constitution into an automaton enforcing some absolute social justice is a doomed endeavor.

The American Constitution (like constitutions in other Western countries) guarantees only majoritarian democracy, with the minority granted the right to continue debate on what the very notion of social justice should mean to us all. It therefore remains for

the American people to reform American society—under their constitution. In modern democracy there is simply no circumventing the will of the majority without destroying democracy itself. At least in the light of historical experience, such an attempt for some higher notion of an absolutely just social ordering of the world would appear unwise.

Individual rights, of course, remain protected even in majoritarian democracy. The entire system is developed to guarantee, not a minority veto on majority decisions, but the continuing debate even after every election regarding what economic prosperity, equity, equality, social justice, and stopping climate change demands of us all. This is what the rights of free speech, freedom of the press, and the like are needed for.

Contrary to what the “Wheel of Power” diagram suggests, democratic thought simply does not submit to the abstract notion of power itself as essentially hegemonic, or patriarchal, or as simple supremacy of someone over someone else. Power itself is a matter of constant negotiation in any genuine democracy and it is constantly redistributed in elections and in daily political debates. This is why President Obama held that African American minority problems are problems of all Americans—something to be solved on a national level, not by minorities on their own.

The dynamics of our ever-continuing power discussion are not as easy to grasp as one might think. Power relations are omnipresent, given that one may find some power aspect in any social norm and practice. Same-sex marriages were once objected to as promoting homosexuality. The majority view of human sexuality had once upon a time produced a norm, which inevitably reflected its own power position in relation to sexual minorities. This is not to say that those norms were necessarily born out of sheer ill will toward sexual minorities. Norms control our everyday life everywhere. Even liberty and equality are norms.

What is that mysterious, all-consuming power actually like, as one finds it situated in the center of the “Wheel of Power”? Power is not about some impenetrable supremacy or hegemony. In its most naked transparency, power can, indeed, be defined as someone’s overpowering control or mastery over some other people or a thing (such as nature). Such mastery may be long-standing or temporary,

but it is always context-dependent and almost always at least partially negotiable. That it is always contestable is proven by strikes, riots, and wars throughout human history.

Power gets redistributed or reaffirmed practically every day in various political discussions and debates in the multiparty Finnish government just as in every American Democratic or Republican party caucus. Power is, in fact, negotiated everywhere all the time, and the basic argument can be of the sort: “Could I some day submit my dachshund to my will as it comes to choosing our walking route?” A friend of mine, an elderly American university professor, once told me his recipe for a happy marriage: “I do as I am told, and I am grateful.” One is perfectly free to choose such a principle if it serves that person’s conviction about how to achieve true marital happiness.

In principle, our private life choices do not belong to the public sphere, the traditional sphere of politics in which we make decisions for both ourselves and for others according to the ancient tenet of promoting the common good. There are exceptions, since traditional societal norms sometime call for reforms in marriage restrictions, just as public interference is sometimes needed in the form of foster care services or in police calming down a heated marital dispute. But considering power as a synonym for supremacy is totally alien to our everyday experience of dealing with people around us.

Does the intersectional supremacy conception apply better to the field of economics? The high priest of antiracism, Professor Ibram X. Kendi holds that even “capitalism is essentially racist.”⁶² By the same token, intersectional scholarship not only insists that “race” has been used as “a form of capital,” but also that capitalism is responsible for entirely flattening queer cultures across the world.⁶³

What should we primarily understand about our apparently hideous, capitalist economic order? World history’s most efficient economic system, Western-originated capitalism is a free marketplace system, resting on risk-entailing investment of capital, a free labor market, and free world trade. By its very nature capitalism assesses everything in the world in terms of its potential returns. This is why the capitalist also views the rest of humankind only via its input value as one additional factor of production, calling it labor force.

In sum, the single purpose of capitalism is to make profit for the investors of capital, who carry the risk of their investment in an always unpredictable free marketplace. Who are these mysterious capitalist investors? They are the millions of private company shareholders across the world, banks, and thousands of other organized investment businesses—including several Finnish pension funds currently with hundreds of billions of dollars in their stock portfolios. Our old-age pensions in Finland are dependent on the profits of those funds.

It is the triumph of capitalism that explains our current record high living standards across the world. From the precapitalist era in the year 1500 until today the GDP in the U.S. and the EU regions has grown at least 32 times higher. Worldwide GDP per capita has risen approximately tenfold. The GDP per capita of Botswana is today 30 times higher than in the 1950s.⁶⁴ This triumph of capitalism also explains the global population explosion since the industrial revolution, even if that has not been solely a blessing to us all, nor to the environment.

Considering the wealth that capitalism has created, abandoning it would hardly be the most convenient solution to the problems of ethnic minorities, sexual minorities, the disabled, elders, or children. Efficient social and healthcare policies would offer a good deal more practical help in solving their problems. In sum, the problem is not the most efficient economic system in world history, but its side-effects, which cause enormous, and still growing, inequalities among humankind. Fighting those side-effects is the very purpose of the Nordic welfare society model.

In many internationally comparative accounts, the Nordic model appears to be the most cost-efficient one for adapting to the international free market economy when efficient equality policies are taken into account—even alongside the purely economic factors of production. The Nordic recipe is simple: equality policies have been forwarded with permanent social policy programs based on individual need, alongside long-term governmental policies favoring organized labor unions' negotiations with the employer organizations on wages and fair labor standards.

This is how the Nordic countries have avoided the most conspicuous American problem of its labor market, namely that an

estimated 40 percent of the labor force works for earnings below decent living standards.⁶⁵ All social politics include choices, even that of avoiding such choices. This principle of cost-efficiency has provided the Finns with a remarkably good, public healthcare system—at approximately half the proportion of GDP compared to what the Americans pay for their less efficient, insurance-based healthcare system.⁶⁶ The efficiency here means that the Finnish healthcare system truly guarantees everyone in need access to a doctor or to a heart surgery for free.

In the United States, social policy debates seem to be circumscribed by time-honored affirmative action policies. Affirmative action might be useful, but one should be careful in analyzing which problems of marginalization it can help to solve. As used in the United States for the last 60 years, its actual results are not particularly promising. Compared to the Nordic model's cost-efficiency with individually measured welfare benefits—based on a proven, actual individual need—one might wonder whether affirmative action can ever achieve what the Nordic model has achieved thus far, particularly as, in the United States, it tends to reach the minorities only at the stage of entering university education.

Any such action as temporarily or permanently reducing the overall level of study requirements in schools or in higher education in the name of “racial” equality (as has been occasionally suggested in the U.S.) is irrational in a world where we, first and foremost, expect people to compete for better jobs.⁶⁷ Appropriating extra funding for weakly-performing elementary and high schools has been a constant topic of political debate in Finland as well.

In the Finnish context it has been evident to everyone that refugees' and other immigrants' needs for housing, social benefits, and thorough language education in Finnish or in Swedish has nothing to do with the color of their skin. Affirmative action must remain just and fair for all, meaning that job and higher education opportunities should remain merit-based. Only when the final choice between any two equally competent applicants is to be made, should one, of course, favor representatives of ethnic minorities, the disabled, or sexual minorities. Occasionally teachers' colleges in Finland have

favoring male applicants to secure that our primary schools and daycare centers would have at least some male teachers.

“No to racism!” campaigns in football/soccer stadiums and elsewhere are important in molding the general attitude, particularly among the young. Attitudes change slowly, but history proves that they do change. In work places, new anonymous recruiting practices have proven to be good innovations, which even some intersectionality-oriented Finnish scholars embrace. Such anonymous recruiting is a merit-based practice unlike the holistic admission practices of top American universities with more or less openly racial profiling with no regard to any measured social impact.

All in all, the “Wheel of Privilege” and the “Wheel of Power” diagrams are usable only for strategies based on victimization as opposed to social colorblindness, which, in fact, is the very basis of modern human rights thinking.⁶⁸ Only the new intersectional critical race studies scholars appear to oppose this time-honored principle of individual justice upon which most liberal societies rest in their social policy engineering. This now demonized principle was embraced by Martin Luther King, Jr.

The intersectional wheel diagrams offer an entirely twisted perspective on what liberal social order is about in the first place. It is about creating equal opportunities and helping people to equally gain those opportunities—against any idea that human selfishness alone, as utilized in our capitalist economic system, could ever amount to good social politics. These two are different things.

While therapy-oriented discussions with the victims of racism and other forms of oppression are definitely needed, therapy discussions cannot function as the basis for developing fair social policies. In a democracy the majority decides with respect to minority rights, while maintaining absolute respect for every person’s right to disagree and continue the political debate, even on the meaning of social justice.

That the prevailing American understanding of social justice differs from that held by the Nordic model should be evident to everyone. Yet, branding one’s opponents as simply racist would not win one more votes, wrote president Barack Obama in his *A Promised Land*.⁶⁹ Similarly, when some Black Lives Matter activists refused to attend Obama’s meetings with other black leaders of the country, he

stated that “you can’t refuse to meet because that might compromise the purity of your position,” but should instead assume “the responsibility to prepare an agenda that is achievable—that can institutionalize the changes you seek—and to engage the other side.”⁷⁰

Let us next shift to a deeper analysis of intersectional self-understanding. The first step will be examining how intersectional scholarship would reform the working methods in social welfare offices across the Western world. As before, it is important to let intersectionality scholars explicate their case in their own words.

AN INTERSECTIONAL SOCIAL SERVICE REFORM

The fundamental problem of the intersectional research approach is that it can empirically validate only its own theory. In considering people’s attitudes, intersectional research focuses only on whether the group under investigation has absorbed its theory or not. Results tend to be negative, because the theory is difficult to grasp according to current Western standards of everyday living, and next to impossible to validate in terms of epistemological thinking.⁷¹

Teaching methodology, cultural studies, and American history at the university has revealed to me how concrete examples help students grasping the theoretical premises of a given approach. Let us therefore consider how intersectional progressives would, for example, reform modern social services. This is how Dr. Eveliina Heino of the University of Helsinki begins her large-scale literature review of the intersectional understanding of social work:

Research validates that intersectionality is a useful concept for social work, given that it brings forth the constructionist and historical nature of social categories, making it possible to examine inequality and privileges through multiple social categories and through their common effects, just as it helps combine individual experience with the structures of society and examine the positioning of both the social service customers and officers.⁷²

The suggested starting point here is not analyzing social marginalization in its cause-and-effect relations, but examining “inequality and privileges” through multiple “social categories.” These “constructionist and historical” categories have been identified first and then combined with “the structures of society.” Whether the constructionist categories are such “structures of society” themselves, is not explicated—and if they are not, what are they?

Heino continues to note that “there are no singular criteria for intersectional research.” It is rather an “umbrella concept” under which “it is possible to examine individual identities, social power relations, structures, and public discourses.”⁷³

What then makes intersectionality different from more traditional methodological approaches in social sciences and humanities? According to Heino, it is “central” to intersectionality to “situate the phenomena under investigation in their historical contexts and to approach them as socially constructed. Hence, individual experiences are not treated as mere individual-level phenomena, but in their connection to social structures so as to reveal the mechanisms producing inequality.”⁷⁴

What does all this tell us about the unique nature of intersectionality? Have traditional sociology, social sciences, or cultural studies previously failed to connect individual experiences to social structures? In fact, the academic discipline of history was developed in the 19th century to put phenomena into their specific “historical contexts.”

If the specific character of intersectionality results from doing research on “individual identities, social power relations, structures, and public discourses,” what on earth have identity studies scholars been doing before intersectionality? Power relations, social structures, and discourses have been studied for ages within the traditional fields of intellectual history, conceptual history, cultural studies, media studies, political studies, and sociology.

Heino finds two specific goals for intersectional research work. First, the “phenomena” under investigation are “approached as socially constructed,” meaning that skin color, gender, sexual experience and our overall experience of the world are viewed as socially framed aspects of human life—and, most conspicuously, usually framed under some oppressive social structure. This is

confirmed by the second specific goal of intersectionality, namely that of “bringing out the mechanisms producing inequality.”⁷⁵

Heino’s literature review includes 44 international articles of intersectional studies on social services, half of them American, also including a couple of Finnish articles. She asks, “from which perspectives have the relation of intersectionality and social services been approached in this literature?” and “in which ways is intersectionality described as meaningful for social work in general?”⁷⁶ She also, briefly, brings up the critique of intersectionality on such questions as whether it is a theory or method. Her conclusion is that “it is impossible, and not even necessary, to achieve universal understanding of intersectionality.”⁷⁷

Intersectionality is thus a valid approach for all social sciences, although one cannot understand it universally. Heino’s position resembles the popular understanding of science whenever the fields of science are not distinguished from one another. One difference between intersectionality and traditional research thinking is, thus, that the latter is universally understandable.

The basis of traditional scientific thinking is simple. Valid research methods are chosen with the criterion that the research question can be answered. Questions that cannot be answered with the chosen package of methods are shifted elsewhere. This is how the fields of sciences become distinguished from each other. It should be evident, therefore, that, for example, psychological issues cannot be resolved by social science methods. In addition, there are questions that science cannot answer at all, such as “Does God exist?” or “What is the purpose of life?”

So-called scientism, the belief in science alone, does not refer to the idea that researchers’ (or any research community’s) current opinions or ruminations should be thought of as scientifically true. Scientific thinking is based on one assumption only, namely that new research hypotheses can be proven right or wrong. Only what is empirically proven is considered scientific knowledge. As for the common misunderstanding about scientism as a mere religion among others, it is good to bear in mind that for today’s physicist the proof that God has created the universe would only make the physicist go on interrogating God about how he created it and how it really works.

The scientific or methodological problem of intersectional scholars' self-proclaimed competence is simple: With their overconfidence for their good cause in studying social marginality, which they call oppression, intersectional scholars' cause, in fact, is to turn all history, cultural studies, social studies, and political studies into one common field of inequality studies—based on their odd assumption that human selfishness is a singular quality of the so-called white race (predominantly the male half), which discriminates against the entire rest of humankind.

To no surprise, Heino's review article abounds with women experiencing violence, women's "representations," other people in variously helpless victim positions, and a bunch of "explicit and implicit presumptions regarding race, class, and gender norms," which allegedly in themselves produce "discrimination and inequality."⁷⁸ At the end of the article we encounter properly intersectional-studies-schooled social officers, who have learned to handle their own "whiteness as undeserved and acknowledged privilege."⁷⁹

This is how Heino describes intersectionality's obsessive need for "a larger view" regarding the current forms of discrimination across the world:

In the United States the movements and organizations of sexual minorities insists on viewing the same-sex marriage as the most important question of social justice. Focusing on the marriage issue, however, does not take into account the interests of the most vulnerable minorities, such as the elderly, the poor, and the racialized minorities in its emphasis on the interest of people from the white middle class. Intersectionality, on its part, focuses on power and privileges also within various minority groups and challenges the system of inequality in a larger scale.⁸⁰

In this quotation even sexual minorities appear accusable of ignoring "the elderly, the poor, and the racialized minorities" as if bringing up one group's problem would automatically hurt all others in the larger context of intersectionality. More notably still, a simple

human rights issue of individuals marrying whom they wish gets mingled with such social justice issues as to how to help the poor and promote the cultural rights of ethnic minorities.

Even women encountering violence cannot be treated merely as victims of violence. Intersectional study wishes to distinguish “privileged” mugged women from all other women suffering from the same mistreatment. Otherwise, we are told, “the attention is given” only “to privileged women’s experiences of violence.”⁸¹

Given that “intersectionality may improve our understanding of multidimensional discrimination,” it may also open up the ways in which even “social work organizations might maintain and produce inequality,” Heino insists. In numerous articles that Heino has reviewed intersectionality “is connected with multiculturalism and racialization as well as with developing social workers’ professional competence.”⁸²

Only one practical innovation for developing that competence, however, is offered: Intersectionality may “provide tools for the social workers’ self-reflection regarding their own position” as officeholders.⁸³ They should be educated to ponder their “own positions regarding various social categories and their intersections, while also considering the temporal change of those positions.” As usual, the focus is on a number of categories such as “race, sexuality, and immigration status,” or “on the intersections of class, race, religion, gender and sexuality” and on “their effects on the everyday life among all social workers as well as among the students and teachers in the field.”⁸⁴

Educating white social workers is important, we are told, because examining “a social worker’s own life helps one to understand which categories in the past and currently affect one’s everyday life and professional status most.”⁸⁵ Heino does not explicate whether the purpose of all this self-reflection is to produce more efficient or only more sensitive workers or whether social workers should perhaps simply learn to like all their customers.

Apparently, then, reforming the Finnish social security and healthcare systems should begin with educating social security officers, nurses, and doctors in self-reflection regarding their skin color. Interestingly, one may find even the Finnish Academy funding,

for example, a research project, which—while resting mainly on Canadian feminist scholarship—attempts to find out, if some Finnish social service practices, in fact, “generate vulnerability” among the troubled women for whom they have been planned. One could, indeed, speak of a scandal if social workers manage to even worsen the troubles of people who have sought their help.

Instead of giving any consideration to the current financial problems in Finnish eldercare centers or to the chronic lack of trained nurses in Finnish hospitals and healthcare centers, Heino, with her international colleagues, calls for courses in self-reflection for social workers and healthcare professionals. While her intersectional study material (frequently insisting on all kinds of contextualization) is gathered from a number of different countries, national differences in resourcing social and healthcare services do not get a single mention.

Given that Heino is a Finnish scholar and that over half of her 44 intersectionality articles are from the United States, a brief comparison of the American and Finnish social policy results is in order.

From a Finnish perspective the level of overall welfare provided by the American healthcare and social security systems appears shamefully low. Despite the American GDP per capita towering 20–25 percent above that of Finland, the official American poverty rate is almost three times higher than the Finnish rate (18 and 7 percent respectively).⁸⁶ The same holds true of the American figure of the homeless as compared to Finland, which might explain the occasionally heated debate about the tents camps of the homeless in California.⁸⁷

Getting a job does not guarantee a decent living for an American worker. The official OECD statistics suggest that the proportion of low-wage jobs among all jobs in the United States is as high as 22,7 percent, while it remains at 8,4 percent in Finland. According to some American sources, as much as 44 percent of the American work force remain below the level of decent living standards. It is hardly surprising that among those, African Americans and women are overrepresented. Given that poorly paid workers often have children or other relatives to care for, one can infer that this problem applies in some form to one half of the nation.⁸⁸

Even before the Covid pandemic the United States used approximately 17 percent of its huge GDP per capita for healthcare, while Finland less than 10 percent.⁸⁹ Nevertheless, the number of hospital beds per capita in the “rich” United States was already 20 percent below the level of “poor” Finland.⁹⁰ For the entire first year of the pandemic the Covid deaths per capita in the United States were tenfold compared to those in Finland, and 3 times higher at the end of it.⁹¹ The most telling figure, however, is that American life expectancy is 3 years lower than that of Finland (USA 79,1 years v. Finland 82,5 years).⁹²

None of this means that wealthier Finns do not use private health care services to get help sooner than others. It only means that free, public healthcare is of precisely the same quality as that of the private sector.

As for educational opportunities, the actual results are similarly confusing regarding such a simple variable as adult literacy in the two countries. With its world top universities, the United States ranked as the 17th OECD country in adult literacy proficiency in 2014 (worse in 2017)—with, for example, the Nordic countries, Canada, Estonia, Korea, and Slovakia ahead of it. Finland, with its national public school system and public universities, was ranked as the 2nd best, right after Japan at the top.⁹³

What explains the differences between the two countries? The key thesis of the intersectional whiteness paradigm is that “unintentional” and “invisible” American “racism by consequence” explains “different” American “educational opportunities, economic differentials between whites and non-whites, residential segregation, healthcare access, and death rate differentials between whites and non-whites.”⁹⁴ How would the whiteness paradigm, then, explain the above-mentioned, striking socioeconomic differences between Finland and the United States? Are the Americans simply more racist than the Finns?

Instead of turning into the deeps of the white supremacy paradigm and the allegedly invisible “consequential racism” there might be an alternative way to consider the socioeconomic differences between the two nations. One may consider them in terms of everyday sociopolitical structures, such as the division of wealth, taxation, public social networks, labor policies, and the like.

In fact, taxation alone explains a lot. The United States taxes its GDP at the level of approximately 24 percent as compared to the Nordic countries (Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden) at approximately 45 percent-level.⁹⁵ The Americans lack funds to cover a higher level of national health and social security. Notably, in the beginning of the 1980s American overall taxation remained close to the European average. It was only during and after the Reagan years of the 1980s that corporate taxes and the taxation of higher income classes has been allowed to gradually crash.

Today, the highest tax percent for the well-to do and the rich is only 37 percent as compared to the Finnish level of 58 percent.⁹⁶ Three of my American friends, all of them full professors, paid lower taxes and other obligatory payments out of their over 9,000 dollars monthly earnings than I did out of my 5,500 dollars monthly wage as a University Lecturer in Helsinki.⁹⁷

For those who would consider health and welfare services only an issue of how much public spending a healthy economy can truly afford, it is worth bearing in mind this fact: While American social and healthcare services remain at a shamefully low level as compared to those of the Nordic countries, the U.S. national debt per capita is currently at approximate 150 percent of the GDP. In Finland, with its startlingly generous welfare, education, and healthcare services the national debt has remained at 82 percent of the GDP.⁹⁸

What has been offered above is a mere statistical comparison for the basis of structural analysis of the differences between the social security and healthcare systems of Finland and the United States. "Structure," of course, is the term particularly in mode among intersectional scholars across the world.

Yet, inferring from Heino's extensive review of intersectional articles on social work, such a comparative approach does not appeal to intersectional scholars. They are more interested in educating social workers in self-reflection, as if resourcing the social sector is of only secondary importance. The genuinely intersectional help for customers trying to make ends meet would apparently consist of social workers' warm expressions of empathy.

Heino also informs us about intersectional innovations in social science methodology. As she writes:

the interlinking of social categories is important not only for the people under study, but also for examining the experiences and interpretations of the researchers themselves, because the positioning of the researcher affects the modification of the research question, the researcher's communication with the people involved, and the final formulations of the researcher's research results.⁹⁹

What is stated here is that less objective you make yourself believe you are, the more objectively you are assumed to have positioned yourself in the society under investigation. While this represents a fairly standard intersectional understanding of objectivity, it differs from the traditional understanding of it. In fact, we are dealing with comparatively simple epistemological issues.

The traditional understanding of objectivity does not concern the personality (or personal background) of a researcher, but the methodology used in a given research project. To illustrate the difference, we earlier saw a somewhat preliminary comparison between American and Finnish social policy results based on very limited statistical information that I had (personally) gathered for the purpose.

The comparison was perhaps subjective, but not because of its author is a white, Finnish, elder, male American studies expert. To question the objectivity of the comparison in question it is not sufficient to accuse the author of a biased attitude to the topic. One must provide additional reliable statistical comparisons of the same topic to qualify or contradict the suggested conclusions.

It might be possible to prove that in evaluating the general welfare of the Americans and the Finns, one should concentrate on entirely other factors to measure national wealth and its distribution among and between the two nations. One could, for example, begin with the GDP in the U.S. being almost 25 percent higher than in Finland or refer to the number of patent applications per capita, which is also much higher in the U.S. than in Finland, and to a whole number of other such variables.¹⁰⁰

As noted earlier, we are all opinionated, but the most elemental methodological rules are not a matter of opinion. Heino's conclusion, nevertheless, is that one cannot claim that "discussions, for example, of racialization and racism; of whiteness as an invisible privilege; of class differences; and of the impact of gender on our everyday life; as well as of minority rights in general would not be relevant in Finland" as they are elsewhere.¹⁰¹ While there are a couple of Finnish studies included in the 44 articles of her entire material, she offers no statement of how such "whiteness as an invisible privilege" represents itself in the Finnish context.

Heino's social studies concepts, such as "whiteness," "an invisible privilege," and "racialization" are all invented by intersectional scholars. As will be shown, outside the intersectional scholars' own theoretical dreamworld, these concepts lack any rational reference regarding the real world we live in. This can be validated by opening up the assumptions behind their allegedly objective sociopolitical concepts. Before examining the intersectional conceptual toolkit more closely, let us here, as a first step, examine the explanatory value of the actual "intersections" themselves.

THE VALUE OF INTERSECTIONAL "INTERSECTIONS"

Let us keep to the method of letting intersectional scholars themselves formulate their arguments in examining the terms "intersection" and "self-reflection" as the route into the very core of intersectional thinking. As the above-quoted Dr. Heino holds, while intersectionality was invented only in 1989, its roots can be traced back to 1960s African American women's poems, essays, and other writings "describing the interlinking of gender, race, class, and sexuality."¹⁰²

The same background is confirmed by another Finnish scholar, Dr. Kaisa Ilmonen (University of Turku): "the black civil rights movement, black feminist aesthetics, the early gay rights movement, and other identity politics movements affected intersectionality in their emphasis on patriarchal, middle-class, or heterosexual hegemony and its oppressive power position."¹⁰³ As Heino summarizes the topic, intersectionality has mainly focused on "the intersections of race, gender, and class."¹⁰⁴

Indeed, one may today encounter such concepts as “whiteness normativity” and “racialization” even on official Finnish governmental websites, such as that of the Non-Discrimination Ombudsman of Finland office, linked to the national Ministry of Justice.¹⁰⁵ Intersectionality is most often defined by its focus on intersections themselves. This description is from the website of the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL, *Terveyden ja hyvinvoinnin laitos*), a public organization under the Finnish Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. According to the Finnish governmental sources, then, intersectionality is

an approach that considers many different factors that simultaneously affect an individual’s identity and position in societal power relations. For example, an intersectional approach posits that characteristics such as gender, social class, age, ethnicity, functional capacity, and sexual orientation cannot be analyzed separate from each other. Intersectionality can be thought of as intersecting differences or inequalities.¹⁰⁶

In sum, intersectionality is dedicated to considering the intersecting positions of different people and their consequent inequality to each other. The late Sanna Marin’s government referred to the same core idea of intersections of intersectionality in its memoranda on developing Finnish social policies. Contrary to the THL website, the government memoranda did not include the concepts of white supremacy or whiteness.¹⁰⁷

Yet, the crucial question to be asked of intersectionality is this: What is innovative or new in the idea that one and the same person may suffer from racism and be a victim of the thousands-of-years-old notion of patriarchy?

At the turn of the 20th century American suffragettes demanded women’s suffrage and prohibition, considering them both necessary primarily in the name of bettering family welfare. Even so, Alice Paul’s National Woman’s Party (NWP) was also founded as early as 1916 with its particular demand of women’s rights as individual rights, regardless of any notion of women’s supposedly “natural” roles as mothers and wives.¹⁰⁸

In her famous 1963 book *The Feminine Mystique* Betty Friedan brought up the crushing impact of the 1950s suburban housewife ideal to young women's self-image, branding the suburbs as nothing but "comfortable concentration camps" for female selfhood.¹⁰⁹ She got into trouble with a yet new "wave" of radical feminism in the 1980s once realizing that the latest paradigm appeared to neglect family issues as if they were non-existent for women's life. The later men's liberation movement is equally feminist in the sense of fighting the ancient patriarchy and its old-fashioned imperatives as to any "genuinely" male self-image.

Fighting patriarchy is then a mode of thought at least half a century older than any intersectional feminism. The old 1960s quip about God stated that "she is black"¹¹⁰ to which the conservatives were quick to add, "and uses a wheelchair." Indeed, intersecting our various images of each other and everything else in the universe was a well-known way of thinking long before the invention of intersectionality.

Heino, like most other intersectional scholars, insists that only the new intersectionality can truly "concretize the intersecting of different social categories."¹¹¹ When, in the history of sociology, did scholars not grasp the idea that a person left on too small a pension might be a disabled woman belonging to a sexual or an ethnic minority—or be all that simultaneously?

Even so, the most confusing claim in the above quotation of the THL's educational website is this: "characteristics [i.e., usually categories] such as gender, social class, age, ethnicity, functional capacity, and sexual orientation cannot be analyzed separate from each other." One rarely encounters such a challenging claim about how to perform an analysis. Exactly how comprehensive an analysis are the scholars looking for? In real life, a public social security official hardly needs to know about the customer's sexual orientation in order to decide whether that person qualifies for unemployment benefits, housing allowance, disability benefits, or the like.

Is it true that in order to satisfy intersectional ambitions in analyzing any specific feature of our social reality one would need a register including everyone's "gender, social class, age, ethnicity, functional capacity, and sexual orientation"? Even Stasi, the notorious

East Germany secret service could hardly have satisfied such a demand.

No traditional research practices and methodology in anthropology, cultural studies, history, political science, or sociology provide tools by which all such variables could be analyzed simultaneously and together. In relation to what would such “positions” be analyzed? The suggestion is beyond any methodologically imaginable means. In order to analyze a given social phenomenon, one needs to divide it first into its constituent parts so as even to distinguish its causes from its effects.

I once encountered a Finnish history student seriously arguing that African Americans’ record high crime rate compared to all other Americans is in itself proof of the country’s overall racism. By the same logic the Asian Americans’ record high university entrance (SAT) test results would prove American racism clearly favoring Asian Americans. Their test results are hugely better than those of white American candidates.

As Professor John McWhorter reminds us, regardless of the popular mistake, it is not true that “unequal outcomes [automatically] mean unequal opportunity,” even though in the liberal social order we all compete for our educational opportunities, good jobs, and best housing conditions.¹¹² In social sciences, as in all disciplines, analytical competence is needed, first and foremost, for distinguishing causes from effects so as to eventually explain any particular aspect of a given social phenomenon.

From here we may proceed to another, even more characteristic feature of intersectional intersections. The idea of intersecting categories of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and the like fundamentally rests not only on the view that all of us are affected by such intersecting positions, but also on the notion that these positions are, by definition, somehow problematic.

For many intersectional scholars it appears evident that “any system of differentiation shapes those on whom it bestows privilege as well as those it oppresses.”¹¹³ On this line of argument, one may wonder if there ever was a form of human sociality that has managed to avoid differentiations.

What kind of social order would lack differentiation of any kind? Is not language a system of differentiation, even while it is

absolutely necessary for any efficient interpersonal communication? We have come back to the earlier question about *in relation to what* exactly intersectionality insists on analyzing all the so-called (no matter how intersecting) categories of race, gender, age, sexual orientation, and the like simultaneously and together.

In fact, the intersectional notion of our identity positions being intersectional does not draw on the simple observation about real life that we all are affected by such specific categories everywhere we go, and keep on being so affected from our cradles to our graves. It is not, however, sufficient for intersectionality to hold that we all have some family background, some state of health, some socially determinable position or status, most of them likely to change over the course of our lives. Nor is it sufficient to intersectionality that we are, nevertheless, expected to educate ourselves, work for our own living, raise our children, and to keep on doing all this at least until the age of retirement.

As we saw earlier, the intersectional conception of the intersectional categories is qualified with an additional tenet that white, middle-class, Western males enjoy some mysteriously privileged experience of this constant intersecting of one's categories. That none of my categories, no matter how thoroughly intersecting—as white, male, heterosexual, academic, divorced, father of two, and the like—mean hardly anything without some actual sociopolitical context is easy to demonstrate.

Hence, if it is true, as Dr. Kaisa Ilmonen formulates the case, that even “white, heterosexual, middle-class, Nordic masculinity, no doubt, consists of an identity formed by multiple intersecting categories,”¹¹⁴ let me offer, in a genuinely intersectional fashion, a brief exercise of self-reflection about positioning in my “social categories and their intersections.”¹¹⁵

I confess to having lived my life within various intersections of the above-mentioned categories, even if I might in the following to some extent “bypass” my whiteness without fully “acknowledging the privileges it brings along.”¹¹⁶ I am a Finnish scholar specializing in American studies, while living far away from the country of my expertise. In addition, I am a father, once divorced, and now again in a constant relationship and a father for the second time. I have worked as a research fellow for years abroad and in Finland as well

as taught intellectual history and American history at numerous Finnish universities on lucrative salary for years, along with being occasionally unemployed for shorter periods of time.

As an asthmatic I am also a customer of Finnish healthcare services. In addition to fully free medical care, I enjoy the support of the Finnish national center of social services and pensions (KELA, *Kansaneläkelaitos*) in the form of all my medication being at least partially subsidized by the government. Finland acquires almost all prescription drugs used in the country by the “call for tender” procedure from international medical companies just as most EU member states and Canada do. As a KELA customer I, hence, practically never pay full price for any prescription medicines I need. Much of this would not apply to any white, male, heterosexual, American colleague of mine.

We have quite an intersection of various social “categories” and “structures” included in my life experiences. The positive effect of Finnish welfare benefits and services on one’s quality of life is remarkable, whether you are a white man or a black woman, should you only be a Finn. Special supportive measures for my younger son, both at daycare and primary school, have been overwhelmingly generous. The Finnish national state supports its citizenry.

As an enthusiastic swimmer, my asthma entitles me to unrestricted use of local swimming halls with a yearly discount card (at 50 euro a year). I am also a customer of the greater Helsinki area communal commuter services, paying only a subsidized travel fare, a coffeeholic (one pot of coffee daily), a temperate friend of good cognac, and a nicotine addict (only vaping today). I now look forward to my retirement at the fairly young age of 65 (not there yet) so as to escape the constant writing of research funding applications, which slows down my research work.

What would intersectionality have to say about all my intersecting categories and positionings of life? Would it not state that I am a privileged white man? At least, it would begin with that claim. As to that privileged condition in life, however, I personally feel that I have not benefitted from my family or ethnic background a bit more than any other Finn.

Like most Finnish school boys, I got used to being slapped in face for no provocation at all, as just a natural part of the everyday

life of testosterone-rich, male teenagers. Throughout my senior high school years, I avoided using the main street of my neighborhood due to a permanent threat of getting mugged by a local street gang (the reason for the threat was never disclosed). Indeed, according to some Finnish migrant surveys, migrants experience less violence than native Finns tend to encounter.¹¹⁷

I went to work during my senior high school years and financed my master's degree by doing marketing business alongside. After gaining my doctorate I managed to pay my quite substantial student loans by fellowships and university jobs, always gaining my next job on the merits acquired in the former ones. I have paid my taxes and managed to support my family in addition to myself. At home I give instructions to my son, at work I follow the instructions of my superiors.

While Dr. Kaisa Ilmonen states that in intersectionality "all identity positions are intersectional,"¹¹⁸ my own understanding of my positioning would nevertheless appear somewhat irrelevant for most intersectional scholarship. An intersectional scholar of some international fame, John Preston, informs us that a white man's own understanding of his identity proves little of it, because "part of white privilege is the supposed 'prosthetic' quality of whiteness, the ways in which individual whites believe that they can transcend individual white identity (and indeed collective racial identity)."¹¹⁹

My chances of ever overcoming such a "prosthetic quality" by myself appear thin indeed. I have been too influenced by two things: First, at least before the rise of intersectional race studies, I have never paid any attention to my own skin color and very little to that of others. Second, I have been all too contented with my life.

It seems clear that human experiences of either "intracategorical" or "intercategorical" intersections (as they are occasionally classified) do not exclusively consist of experiences of mere unalloyed submission, oppression, or depravity. Intersectional "categories" are evidently something all human beings share in varying degrees and differently from each other, depending on the place and time and on the general transience of our positionings in such intersections. Hardly anyone spends one's entire life as unemployed or on sick leave, whether black or white in skin color.

No one spends an entire life as an elder person on too small pension benefits.

Contrary to the intersectional approach, analyzing any social structure should, in fact, begin by asking what makes it social as compared to, say, mental, political, or economic structures, and what then makes it distinct, and in which respects, from other social structures. Belonging to the working class or to the lower middle class does not automatically equate with belonging to the poor and the deprived.

Viewing social justice from the viewpoint of intersections alone does not help in discerning the impact of any particular social structure on an individual's life or on another such structure. Nor is much help offered by the apparently inescapable Foucauldian notion of all discourse being power discourse—a conception which intersectional scholarship appears to be particularly fond of, as we will see later on.

Why is an individual's identity, with all its intersecting aspects, automatically considered problematic in intersectionality? It becomes problematic, because one's identity is by definition understood to be a group identity of some sort. As Dr. Ilmonen states the case, instead of pondering societal norms independently, we are all "subjects," born and raised by "conventions and discourses," while this "subjectivity constructs its very self by renewing the norms of existing power relations."¹²⁰

Professor Lena Näre of the University of Helsinki confirms Ilmonen's description of this intersectional fundament without any loopholes. Näre proclaims that traditional liberalism itself rests on a hallucinatory "notion of achieving recognition as the basis of individual identity politics" thus, in fact, bypassing "the possibilities for collective campaigning" and leaving "the prevalent power hierarchies" unquestioned.¹²¹

Only when you feel oppressed do you become an interesting subject of study in intersectionality, which by Näre's definition concerns itself with "the analysis of multifaceted, omnipresent inequality, oppression, and discrimination," and "the synthesis of such grounds of inequality," rather than with "any hierarchical analysis of various aspects of inequality."¹²² Again, any relationship between causes and effects is deemed unimportant, given that the aim is an

analysis of everything simultaneously, while specifically avoiding any “hierarchical analysis” of the “various aspects” of the problem itself.

We have now reached the core of intersectionality, where all our intersecting positions of life provide us an identity as a minority identity only—regardless of how temporary this (always somehow oppressed) minority position happens to be. This is what the concept of hideous whiteness is needed for in intersectionality: It serves as a kind of superstructure above us all, and remaining so for every white person until that person’s conversion to the intersectional faith.

As if by a lucky accident, however, the actual “minority status” of any human being—in the deepest possible sense of the term, although contrary to the intersectional wisdom—has been present in Western liberal thought from its very beginnings. In traditional liberalism, each and everyone of us is a mere “me” in relation to every other human being on earth—no matter how many intersecting categories of gender, sex, ethnicity, general abilities and capacities may be ascribed to us.

One may, hence, deconstruct the entire intersectional fabric of human beings as identified only by their intersecting categories by clinging to the core tenet of liberalism that we all enjoy the exclusive right to determine our own individual identity. This is also why the liberal, Nordic welfare system, in offering to help you in your predicaments does not, as a rule, inquire into your specific minority position regarding your ethnic or social or sexual or health-related—perhaps even intersecting—“categories.” Instead, it asks: “What kind of help You would need?”

The right of individual identity formation is the first thing that the intersectional, critical race theory denies us all. According to the intersectional theory, we have a problem every time a white individual bypasses one’s own whiteness not “recognizing the privileges that come with one’s color of skin.”¹²³ The thesis dictates that the mere white skin color of a male individual provides him with a privileged position over all other people across the world. For this to be so, it must also mean that all others have, because of the above-mentioned social “constructions” and “categories,” a harder time getting along in this world than white men.

Does this paradigm somehow indicate that a white Finnish plumber would receive equal pay for furnishing yards less of water pipe than the same company's migrant workers? Or, does it mean that the male plumber in a pub would get his vodka shot before the ladies at the bar (that at least seeming extremely unlikely to everyday experience)? We already know that it does not indicate that a black man cannot be elected President of the United States.

No Finnish plumber that I ever met has appeared to feel bereft or suffer from any alienating "otherness" in relation to me as a doctor of philosophy. I have rarely encountered as professionally proud and self-confident people as Finnish plumbers, electricians, and construction workers. None of them has ever expressed anything beyond mild confusion regarding my line of work, whenever the topic has come up during our conversations. Even if we are distant "others" to one another, we have been equally happy in not being alike.

As for any excluding notion of Finnishness, I feel that I have much more in common with my American friends and academic colleagues than I have ever felt with a single Finnish construction worker. The hopes, talents, inclinations, and ambitions of even white male Finns genuinely differ from each other.

Most important, no category of gender, sex, ethnicity, or income class means much outside the context of the particular society and the particular power structures within which one actually lives. And intersectional analysts are conspicuously uninterested in considering the different national or local cultures even among white people across the world.

White people also disagree among themselves. How would the whiteness paradigm account for the endless wars among the imperialist white nations during the colonial era? After the Napoleonic Wars (1792–1815), with over 3 million European deaths, the European powers continued fighting with each other throughout the 19th century via at least ten major wars culminating in WWI (1914–18) with 10 million European deaths alone and WWII (1939–45) with 50 million European death casualties. Or, from exactly what kind of whiteness complex did President Putin (according to any reasoned thinking) suffer from when he invaded, as he claimed, to traditional Russian soil of Ukraine in 2022?

The crucial question to be posed about the whiteness paradigm is this: Where is or ever was such a common culture of those hideous white heteromales, shared by them all against everyone else on earth? To add to my personal alienation from even my most intimate circle of Finnish friends, none of them share my passion for Will Eisner's graphic novels. We are all cultural beings, which is why we experience even the same cultures differently.

As for differences between Finnish and American cultures, they are no less striking. Some of the first mainstream cultural differences I encountered in the United States, when living there in the mid-1990s and the early 2000s, were the openly homophobic attitudes and somewhat old-fashioned understanding of gender roles even among our family friends. Once a female friend asked my permission (as the "head" of the family) to ask my wife out for a couple of drinks in the evening.

At the University of Virginia one the recommendations stated that professors should be addressed only as Mr., Mrs., or Ms. These formal equality policies did not go much below the surface.

At a dinner offered by our professor at the end of a graduate history seminar, the host noted with apparent satisfaction that the only B.A. student in the course showed the decency to stay away. In an orientation course for doctoral students mainly in their 30s, our host, a 25-year-old tutor for the course admitted to being a bit old-fashioned but wished to be addressed as "Ma'am" by us mere students.

Anti-statism is a particularly American trait of thought, utterly inconceivable for a Finn, coming from a Nordic welfare state. I once hosted a trip for a number of Native Americans to Lapland to meet with Sami people. The representatives of Seminole and other Native American nations were much more American in their anti-statism than they themselves were aware. During the trip we had many discussions in which they expressed deep astonishment at my naivety in believing that the Finnish national government (or any other government in the world) would genuinely care about my individual rights. They were equally appalled when visiting the studio of Sami Radio in Inari and hearing that the station was part of Finnish national public broadcast company—in other words, under governmental control.

Anti-statism might be reflective of long-standing distrust among Americans themselves. As Ta-Nehisi Coates once noted, “what Obama was able to offer white America is something very few African Americans could—trust. The vast majority of us [African Americans] are, necessarily, too crippled by our defenses to ever consider such a proposition.”¹²⁴

Social studies appear to confirm that trust in the public institutions and consequently in one’s fellow citizens is an important factor for the success of the Nordic welfare model. Trust in working democratic institutions and citizenry appears also to turn into the voting patterns of parties that guarantee the permanence of welfare benefits.¹²⁵ In Finland even the conservative party’s election slogans regularly include the promise of “saving our welfare society”—even if by allegedly more responsible financial policies than the leftist parties can promise.

As to differences of everyday attitudes between Americans and Finns toward strangers, there were two major ones according to my personal experiences: The first one was obligatory smiling, and the second was getting bossed around everywhere. For a Finnish graduate student, obligatory smiling at everyone one walked by on Charlottesville sidewalks was a new life experience. After two weeks I got so accustomed to it that when a young man failed to respond to my smiling nod, I was immediately afraid of a perhaps violent reaction. We learn cultures. To be sure, Americans tend to be more friendly to talk with than famously introvert Finns.

As to getting bossed around, I remember vividly, how in the upstairs elevator foyer of the Empire State Building the maintenance official scared a whole group of tourists by yelling angrily after me “Where do you think you are going?” The reason for his reprimanding tone was that I had not asked his permission before beginning to look for a route to a photograph exhibition on a lower level, though in full view of the elevator doors.

I tended to receive similar treatment from bus drivers, janitors, shopkeepers, and all kinds of officials (of all colors of skin) advising me of proper behavior practically everywhere I went. I came to understand the classic movie prison guard figure yelling to the prisoner, “You belong to me now!” I had never before experienced such distrust of my personal abilities for decent behavior.

In Finland people practically never comment upon each other's behavior as long as one follows the most common rules of proper behavior. Most important, those rules remain the same anywhere you go and regardless of who runs which particular private or public service. As a Finn in America, I did not long to be particularly respected, but only to be left alone, whether going shopping, taking a bus ride, visiting the UVA swimming hall, or partaking in any other activity in public.

I also asked a couple of my American colleagues (all having spent more than six months in Finland) to comment on the differences between Finland and the United States. One stated that Finns have "until recently been a homogenous monoculture which has never been the case in the U.S.," whereas he would "regard Finns as profoundly not strange" unlike his fellow-Americans, whom he found "profoundly weird with all of our cults, siloed populations, adherence to crank theories and philosophies, and avoidance of reality."

Another commentator noted: "I would say on balance, the Finns are better behaved." He only wondered "why every hunk of chicken at a Finnish grocery store need to be coated in a red barbeque powder, and why, for that matter, vitamins (and pain medication) were so much less potent in Finland." A third one opined that "Americans are much more individualistic and focus more upon themselves at the expense of the common good."

We are here speaking of mere generalizations. But it seems clear that even individualism can be perceived differently in different Western cultures. And none of this, of course, is to reprimand the Americans about how they tend to experience and perform their individualism.

Given that even Finnish and American thinking and everyday practices tend to be highly divergent one should, indeed, ask to what exactly the intersectional concept of whiteness and white privilege might refer as a cultural entity. For an actual whiteness culture to be considered something more than a mere theoretical construction one must be able to verify its existence empirically. If there is no such entity, people cannot be automatically excluded from it by some inherently white, heterosexual, normative behavior. And

intersectionality cannot prove the existence of it, because such an entity is nowhere to be found.

When considering social problems—be they single parent issues, children protection cases, unfair recruitment practices, racism, national health issues, poverty, drug problems, street violence, or organized crime—one should have at least a basic understanding as to how the society in question has attempted to deal with those problems. In intersectional texts, however, the new solutions tend to be suggestions like enhancing “social workers’ understanding of the fact that their customer can be at the same time in a privileged and yet in a vulnerable position.”¹²⁶ Who ever in world history has been unaware of such a trivial fact as that?

The notion of even a “privileged” individual being occasionally “vulnerable” is sound indeed, but only provided that we should distinguish people into classes of the “privileged” and the “underprivileged” to begin with. Do we? Intersectional scholars solve problems created by their own classifications of people automatically doomed by their distinct “categories” as privileged or underprivileged.

That this notion of privileged occasionally being vulnerable is from a Finnish intersectional scholar validates that intersectionality pays practically no attention to how, for example, the Finnish welfare state is intended to work in the first place. Let us briefly discuss this issue, given that it appears alien to the thinking patterns of intersectional scholarship.

In a 2022 Finnish government memorandum it was noted that in further developing Finnish equality policies there is a need to pay more attention to such intersectional distinctions and classifications among people as “age, disability, ethnic background, and socioeconomic position” alongside mere gender.¹²⁷ Again intersectionality was defined as if no one had earlier grasped that some other factors besides gender may affect one’s living conditions.

The ideal of equality, however, has always been advocated by the uniquely efficient Finnish welfare system only in terms of tailoring social services according to the special needs of any individual in need of help. Would someone truly wish to write a comprehensive report about one’s sexual orientation, skin color, health, mental health, and

un/employment status for the Finnish national social security office when applying for a housing allowance?

Comprehensive forms of help are reserved for those who have entirely lost control over their own wellbeing. A close friend of mine suffered a mental breakdown in the form of deep psychosis at the age of 23 and spent brief periods in a number of mental institutions for the next ten years. A lot of financial and mental support was also needed from friends and relatives until he was properly diagnosed and offered a mix of sufficient medication to get along on his own, although on a permanent disability pension. Incidentally, this gifted individual was not a drug abuser, he was just unlucky with his particular mix of genes as a white, Finnish man.

Historically speaking, the Finnish welfare system has been developing its current mix of social benefits, national health care practices, and all kinds of subsidies for a long period of time. After WWII it took decades for Finland to reach the average European GDP per capita and eventually rise well above it.

As early as the 1950s a number of Finnish smallholders enjoyed constant farm subsidies offered by the national government. Their number had recently increased, when tens of thousands of war veterans were offered land to be turned into small farming fields. While the same subsidies were also enjoyed by larger estates, no one presumed that the farmers should be ashamed of their exclusively white skin color or of their way of living. Ironically enough, migrants tend to show more trust in the current Finnish social service system than natural-born Finns themselves.¹²⁸

The Nordic welfare system is grounded on the idea of keeping everyone as capable as humanly possible of producing welfare for us all, while not forgetting those in need of help. Everyone gets sick sometimes and everyone gets older. Some people suffer from chronic long-time diseases, which are not their own fault, if getting sick can be a fault to begin with. In sum, everyone needs help at some point of one's life.

Why is it that there should be a public system guaranteeing help in sickness rather than a personal network or a neighborhood? The reason is that the modern competitive economic system cannot allow us to adjust our working hours to our family needs. A schoolteacher cannot raise children as a housewife can, nor can a

construction worker quit his construction site just because of a sickness in the family. Public daycare centers, healthcare centers, hospitals, police force, and the like have been established to keep people able to contribute to the welfare of us all under the modern, highly competitive capitalist economy.

The American traditions of neighborhood help and volunteer community services are genuinely respectable, but hopelessly insufficient given the actual social policy results they have ever managed to produce. I have never heard of the American style of voluntary health and dental care units circling the remote countryside of Finland. No matter how deprived a sick Finn might feel, s/he can always meet a doctor or get a gallbladder removal for free.

To grasp the difference between system-based social support and the ethos of voluntary help it is illuminating to note that generosity, indeed, is an American value. In terms of “generosity,” the U.S. was ranked the 20th most generous country in the world, while Finland’s ranking was 91st. Yet, when it came to the notion of general “social support” available, Finland scored as the 2nd best in the world, whereas the United States occupied the 35th place, which was below average among the rich countries in the world.¹²⁹

The ethos of the Nordic model does not lie in any particularly emotional, national attachment to the idea of helping the poor, the sick, or the lazy. It lies in the notion of us all rowing one and the same boat and that any idea of “letting the devil take the hindmost” would endanger everybody in the boat. My father, who complained about high taxes throughout his working career, stopped complaining after free hip and two heart surgeries in later years.

In Thailand I heard a young American couple complaining how merely fetching their newly adopted child was taking weeks and had already necessitated resorting to a big bank loan. My wife and I fetched our child from a local orphanage the next day after our arrival on a two-week trip, which the Finnish, public adoption office paid for—a nice hotel room included.

Our adopted young man, at 1,5 years old, had his Finnish name registered into the national social security system with no other ceremonies than my telling the officer what to write on his social security form. After that he visited national child healthcare services on a monthly basis like any other Finnish toddler. Of course,

we also received a small monthly payment as child support money for the next 14 years.

Whether or not actual health and social policy results favor the Nordic model over others, and while there is no perfect society in our imperfect human world, social sciences are supposed to provide information for either improvements or thorough changes to any such a model. Cost-efficiency is not a secondary issue. Even free healthcare and free university education cost money.

But never before intersectionality have social science scholars needed to brand Finnish people—who as hard-working taxpayers provide the funding for our infrastructure, national defense, and extravagantly generous health and social security services—as particularly privileged (including those Finnish smallholders enjoying government subsidies in order to farm at all) only because of their usually white skin color.

Proceeding with the principle of taking intersectional scholars at their own words, let us next examine how the whiteness paradigm, with its own racist undertones, was developed.

2. Inventing Whiteness

THE SO-CALLED “SOCIAL STRUCTURES”

Were race such a decisive criterion for everything in the modern world, why is it that the American superpower has no problems with the Japanese, with the South Koreans, with the Pakistanis or with African countries, while there are constant tensions with countries such as Russia, China, North Korea, and Iran? Ethnicity appears to have particularly little meaning for actual military might or cultural influences between the West and the rest of the world.

From the cultural studies perspective intersectionality manifests the fashionable transcultural approach, and to an extent has been its victim from its very beginning. Insofar as the goal of transcultural studies is to “define shared interests and common values across cultural and national borders,”¹³⁰ the idea looks suspiciously old.

Such early modern natural law philosophers as Hugo Grotius (1583–1645), Samuel Pufendorf (1632–1694), and John Locke (1632–1704) aimed at exactly the same goal when creating the notion of international law—all of them still occasionally referred to by the U.S. Supreme Court. None of this is to claim that transcultural studies should be abandoned, provided only that scholars in the field still respect cultures themselves as genuinely meaningful for people living in those cultures.

Yet, my own, almost 30-year experience as a university teacher provides ample evidence that students introduced to cultural studies mainly through transcultural approaches never grasp the idea of a culture itself as always specific, precisely because of its differences from other cultures. If cultural studies scholars lose the ability to understand human beings as cultural beings, how would they ever be able to explain other, perhaps ancient cultures and their strange, occasionally appalling, cultural traits?

Multiculturalism as an ideal may well be inclusive, as intersectional scholars demand it should be, but no one wears a niqab on a street of Helsinki in order to prove one's multiculturalism. The wearer of the niqab does so because her religious culture is dear and valuable to her personally. Accepting this as her right, without any demand for others to join her is multiculturalism with individual rights.

Indeed, it is often difficult to grasp what the intersectional fuss regarding inclusion is actually about. A heterosexual black man may well respect a homosexual white man as his fellow-citizen and even perhaps as his friend with no need to question his own sexual identity.

In this chapter we will first examine some social structures in Finland and in the United States in comparison to the understanding of structures themselves in intersectional race studies and whiteness studies in particular. We need to come to understand what the key intersectional conception of racialization is supposed to mean and what, in fact, it means as analyzed in intersectional scholars' own words.

Whiteness studies' truly exceptional take on history needs to be put into the context of larger historical developments than merely that of colonial-era race theories. Finally, it is worth considering what their so-called "racial" equality would mean in terms of traditional colorblindness, which is and ought to remain the basic fundament of justice in modern, democratic thought.

It is methodologically difficult not to find discrimination in the world if the research field is defined as it is in intersectionality—that is, with the purpose of describing “overlapping or intersecting forms of *discrimination* related to gender, sex, ethnicity, age, socioeconomic status, sexuality, geographic location, disabilities, etc.”¹³¹ There is nothing wrong in studying discrimination, of course, provided only that one does not presume it to be automatically the most characteristic aspect of our human world and of the apparently infinite number of our various cultural practices.

It is no less important to ask oneself what counts as “discrimination” regarding such other terms as deprivation, marginalization, isolation, and the like in the current, liberal world order, which is confessedly based on the notion of every individual

competing with others in their personal pursuit of happiness, whatever that happiness looks like for each of us. There is no natural law dictating that one's marginalization must result from the ill will or ignorance of other people.

The thesis of this chapter is that in order to grasp why marginalization in the United States has grown to such frightening proportions, one does not need to think of it in terms of white supremacy; a general look into the history of U.S. social politics during the last 60 or 30 years suffices to explain its current state.

By and large, marginalization tends to result from the loss of control of one's own life in terms of family matters, adequate income, physical and mental health, and the like. If there are discriminating social structures, such structures must be first shown to exist and their effects proven. In this critical race studies, alongside intersectional studies have failed entirely. Consider the statement by the most famous scholar in the field of critical race studies, Professor Ibram X. Kendi, as put in *Time* magazine in 2021:

If we're not teaching students that the reason why racial inequity exists is because of racism, then what they are going to conclude as to why racial inequity exists? They're going to conclude that it must be because those Black people must have less because they are less.¹³²

The statement oddly assumes that there are no other reasons beside racist attitudes, such as socioeconomic factors, including extremely expensive education, or organized crime in American cities to explain why African Americans as a group still fare worse than white Americans and most other ethnic groups in the country.

At least Kendi's statement assumes that those other reasons need not be explained to students. Another African American professor, John McWhorter, holds that there are also specific cultural traits among black Americans themselves contributing to their longstanding, large-scale marginalization as compared to other ethnic groups.¹³³

Not only Kendi, but intersectional scholars in general tend not to be interested in studying actual sociopolitical structures and their varying effects on people with different abilities (and disabilities)

as well as different ethnic, sexual, gender, and family backgrounds. Instead, they are interested in proving the existence of one superstructure above all others, which they call either whiteness or white supremacy. This doctrine of a heinous superstructure serves intersectional scholarship in its alarming lack of interest in any other political, economic, social, or mental structures.

What is the difference between the intersectional key concept of “racialization” and the commonplace, traditional understanding of racism? The intersectional notion of racialization is rooted in the view that from the 17th century onward white Europeans and white American colonists have been kept on “racializing” the entire rest of humankind as distinguished from white people and as thus less than fully human.

The far less well-known corollary of this historical view is that the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s failed to fully acknowledge this historical wrong. Contrary to the principle of justice and fairness being fundamentally colorblind—a principle once embraced as radical by both John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King, Jr.—the new woke generation demands to be recognized not as mere human beings but as continuously racialized representatives of oppressed minorities.

This is why new intersectional scholars tend to object to any notion of colorblindness. On the contrary, they claim that the color of skin should be the first thing noticed prior to any sociopolitical debate on what to reform and how to reform it in the current world order. In sum, they claim the right to racialize in return. The white majority is to be made aware of their “race” and of their consequent racism as a kind of ancient master race.¹³⁴

Indeed, an intersectionality scholar from the University of Helsinki offered consolation to all white Finns for whom it may “appear painful to acknowledge their own privileged position as white.”¹³⁵ This is also why the Hollywood star Rosanna Arquette ended up publicly confessing how “sorry” she was for being “born white and privileged”—a fact that now “disgusted” her.¹³⁶

The fundamental point is that Euro-American Western society is viewed as dominated by white people. Whiteness itself is, hence, “both a social structure and an embodied position within” an “overlapping structure” that shapes a certain “racialized order

dominated by whiteness.” As a consequence, one needs to “comprehend extreme and ordinary whiteness as interrelated parts of the same power-structure.”¹³⁷ All white people, no matter how antiracist some of them might feel themselves to be, are, according to intersectionality, part of the oppressive, essentially white ordering of societies across the Western countries and elsewhere.

Some intersectional scholars themselves consider “structural racism” difficult to define, because they constantly find it to be an “invisible” kind of racism.¹³⁸ The Finnish governmental Health and Welfare Organization (THL) informs us that “structural racism is often unconscious. It can manifest as seemingly neutral practices that, in reality, exclude people who are considered to be different from the majority population.”¹³⁹

In sum, the intersectional whiteness thesis claims that Western society itself is built upon racism as its most fundamental power structure, thus rendering the traditional notion of equal human rights and democracy as the main pillars of Western social design secondary if not meaningless in comparison. Whiteness itself postulates a kind of a social superstructure, a known explanation for everything prior to any other structural analysis.

In terms of actual power structures, the intersectional claim is that all identity formation categories, such as ethnicity, class, sexuality, caste, age, and the like are “socially or culturally constructed” and manifest themselves “in multiple ways in various interpersonal relations” so as actually to sustain only “dominant power relations.” In sum, all these identity formation categories are “upholding the existing power relations” and are, hence, unavoidably oppressive.¹⁴⁰

For Kimberle Crenshaw herself “structural intersectionality” referred simply to the overlapping, layered problems of an abused (raped or battered), uneducated black woman “burdened by poverty and child care responsibilities, and the lack of job skills.”¹⁴¹

Once again, all structures and social constructions—apparently no matter whether social, economic, literary, political, or of some other kind—function in the analysis only to prove the power relations involved to be totalitarian in character, since all intersectional categories speak to only “dominant power relations,” and to “hegemonic knowledge systems” guaranteeing the

maintenance of a presumed “white supremacy” in all its forms and variations.¹⁴² From such a hegemonically overlapping-power-relations mess only a whiteness paradigm may free us: this is the basic claim of this new branch of social sciences.

Intersectionality cannot afford distinguishing economic, social, and political structures or different historical situations from one another in fear of finding the world full of discordance among the American, Chinese, Columbian, and European elites themselves. Most tellingly, unlike what the whiteness paradigm presumes, doing research on social structures is not the same thing as studying mentalities (whether racist, equalitarian, or elitist), even if they are related to what is called social constructions.

As mentioned earlier, intersectional scholars may well hold that “when a Black person attacks an Asian person, the encounter is fueled perhaps by racism, but very specifically by white supremacy.” This is because the superstructure of white supremacy “does not require a white person to perpetuate it.”¹⁴³ The black person here is under the influence of a particular structural compulsion or an internalized norm of hate crime as acceptable because of white supremacy. Whiteness is exactly like the Christian original sin, it is only that it now concerns only one specific part of humankind.¹⁴⁴

Not only does whiteness represent an established supremacy, but it is renewed and constantly reproduced in our daily lives everywhere, all the time. As the apostle of “white fragility” Robin DiAngelo has it, even school teachers across the Western world actually teach whiteness to white and colored children alike. They hence “produce whiteness.”¹⁴⁵ Producing whiteness is not difficult, because all modern school curricula manage to do so simply by teaching biology, chemistry, geography, history, and mathematics. One might wonder if the modern school should not teach students what majoritarian democracy is made for, what capitalistic economic structures are like, and eventually how one might attempt to become competitive in modern job markets.

To an extent we are dealing here with a new version of the recent Western megatrend of seeking “biographic solutions to systemic contradictions” as sociologist Zygmunt Bauman has identified it. The intersectional trick is to find those biographic solutions only among people of white skin color.¹⁴⁶

To address the deeper, psychological level of such biographic solutions DiAngelo offers consultant services to help every white person to locate one's racist self, for she "knows" that not only open racists, but all white people have one.¹⁴⁷ Professor McWhorter is amazed that white people "flock and even pay to listen to Robin DiAngelo teach them" about their inherent racism—activities which, he asks, "make poor black people less poor how and when exactly?"¹⁴⁸

According to the whiteness paradigm, not only education but practically all other functions of modern society contribute to producing whiteness. This is not too surprising given that whiteness, as we saw earlier, works as euphemism not only for homophobia, misogyny, sexism, racism, but also for the open and hidden forms of oppression of women, ethnic minorities, disabled, uneducated, children, and all other minorities. More astonishingly still, it also appears to account for the capitalist, generally competitive social order of the West as well as for individualism itself. In other words, the field of whiteness studies is hostile to the very idea that everyone is ideally responsible for one's own happiness with the guaranteed rights of suffrage and free speech.

Intersectionality has, in sum, reinvented evil human selfishness for the modern world, and named it whiteness. As for the fabricated historical image in which all this would appear somehow plausibly related to American slavery, racial segregation, and the like, the intersectional narrative consistently lacks any analysis of historical developments after the desegregation of the 1960s.

It is true that even at the turn of the millennium 40 percent of all American prisoners were African Americans, although they comprise only 13 percent of the population.¹⁴⁹ In 2020, of all people under murder charges in New York City, 63 percent were African Americans, as were the murder victims. The percentage of whites charged with murder was about 6 percent, while the category "Hispanics" covered the rest.¹⁵⁰ Notably, the Americans have a long tradition of such ethnically categorized crime statistics, as in all statistics also concerning welfare services and other social functions.

One indication of extreme inequalities and ethnic tensions among the Americans is the fact that the United States is the most violent of all Western countries. Its murder rate per capita is fivefold

that of Finland. Should any other Western country face a sudden rise of crime rates up the American level, a general state of emergency would be in order.¹⁵¹

As to how ethnic tensions relate to criminal activity, African Americans do not only suffer from hate crimes more than other Americans, they also commit such crimes more than others do. In New York City Asian Americans were targeted 20 times in 2020. All in all, 11 African Americans, 6 Latinos, 2 whites, and 1 “Black Hispanic” were arrested for these hate crimes.¹⁵²

All major ethnic groups (excluding Native Americans, comprising currently only 1,5 percent of the population)¹⁵³ were hence involved in these (few) hate crimes. The number of arrested whites was conspicuously small, given that they still comprise almost 60 percent of the entire population. Marginalized minorities are clearly more apt to resort to such crime than others.

In fact, to grasp why marginalization among African Americans (and other ethnic groups in the U.S.) has remained at such frightening proportions one does not need to think of it in terms of white supremacy. A general look into the history of U.S. social politics during the last 60 years suffices to explain the general level of marginalization. A stunning majority of Americans (53 percent of whites, 81 percent of blacks, and over 70 percent of Asians) believe that there is “systematic racism” in the country.¹⁵⁴ What is meant by this astonishing claim may appear somewhat mysterious, given that so few researchers have been able to locate where in the system itself such systemic racism actually occurs.

As a teacher of American Studies in Helsinki I encounter claims such as that the African Americans’ exceptionally high crime ratio is in itself proof of American racism. Clearly, it is difficult for students and laymen alike to grasp what is, in fact, “systematic” or “structural” in structural racism. Structures may be discriminatory, but each and every one of them must be considered in relation to each other in order to find out what might make this or that particular structure harmful. All structures are not necessarily merely social constructions. Institutions of justice and political power structures also have impact on our notions of a just social order. Nor is every attitude evidently a social structure in itself.

Sociopolitical structures may in the worst case produce racist attitudes for the simple reason that people of marginalized groups perpetrate crimes more than people in other economic or ethnic groups.¹⁵⁵ Let me offer an example of an incident perhaps including an element of structural racism.

Why was an African American, detained merely for drunk driving, shot dead by the police on a parking lot of a hamburger restaurant in Atlanta on June 12, 2020? The black man resisted arrest, managed to get free and run to escape until the chasing police officer eventually shot him in the back.¹⁵⁶ Why would anyone resist arrest in such circumstances?

One very possible reason is that even a minor infringement may lead to an extremely long prison conviction if the defendant has any prior criminal record, particularly given American prisons' reputation of being deadly dangerous places to spend any of your time. It is similarly difficult to understand the use of a deadly weapon by the police officer in a case where obviously no life was threatened.

Perhaps behind such a catastrophic misjudgment was not mere learned brutality, but brutality resulting from a general fear among the police forces regarding their more or less regularly armed clientele, the most dangerous of whom belong to street gangs and other criminal organizations.

Both American prison conditions and the attitudes of the police have a social background, which should be put under scrutiny in order to prevent such tragic incidents. One might begin with the phenomenon known as mass incarceration, which refers to the fact that no other Western country has so many people in prison as the United States.

The U.S. proportion of prisoners per 100,000 inhabitants is as high as 655. In Finland this figure is 53.¹⁵⁷ The actual reason for this appalling number of prisoners is that middle-class fears about rising crime rates have been soothed for decades by one method only. The method has been that of increasing convictions on minor drug crimes as well as all other crimes and simultaneously lengthening the prison sentences for them. All this has contributed to increased resistance to police on the streets for fear of long prison sentences—and consequently to the police toughening its treatment of suspected people.

The social structures relevant to these issues, then, have to do with changes in national criminal policies. They also provide the structural reasons for the appalling fact that the American police kill over 1,000 Americans every year as compared to the EU police forces, all together, killing approximately 100 Europeans a year.¹⁵⁸

A problematic social structure or a combination of structures causes irrational behavior on the level of an individual, as in the case of an African American violently resisting arrest for drunk driving. American police have attitudes, detainees have attitudes, and the justice system has criminal policies regarding different kinds of crime, often reflecting the still continuing war on drugs. Similarly, the federal and state systems continue reforming laws regarding not only crime, but also the currently hugely unequal distribution of wealth in one of the richest countries in the world.

The intersectional superstructure of whiteness does not help one in analyzing this kind of structural web of causes and effects. Rather, it is created to avoid viewing any other structures as worth a structural or functional or any other kind of analysis. One may ask if its structural analysis of the incident in which five African American police officers beat to death an African American man for a mere traffic violation would be simply that the violators' minds were poisoned by the culture of white supremacy.¹⁵⁹ Speaking of whiteness as the reason for sociopolitical problems in American society simply has little to do with anything worth calling a structural analysis (of anything).

There is still an additional question to be asked about all this: The tightening criminal policy naturally hits hardest the ethnic minority with the highest crime record (leading to the single parenthood of the prisoners' children, for example), but have we thus far been talking about structural racism or only about different kinds of sociopolitical structures that contribute to criminal behavior among all Americans?

Longer prison sentences have hardly ever reduced actual criminality. In Finland, the gradual shortening of prison sentences over the last two decades has coincided with a dramatic fall of homicides. By 2022 these had fallen to half the figure of the year 1990 (from 145 incidents to 78)—falling much lower than the absolute figures of the 1950s with a significantly smaller population.¹⁶⁰ Yet, in homicides per

capita Finland is still ahead of such countries as Denmark, Germany, and Sweden.

As to the national differences in practical police work, police shootings from 2000 to 2021 caused 10 deaths in Finland (one every other year).¹⁶¹ In South Carolina, with the same population, as many as 21 people were killed in police shootings in 2022 alone.¹⁶²

Most importantly, however, in none of the texts analyzed for this volume did I find a single suggestion of where to look for proofs of systematic or structural racism in Finland or in the United States.

Such proofs may be available in statistical info, say, on the number and nature of legal prosecutions against African American defendants as compared to defendants from other ethnic groups or in evidence of police profiling. But in order to analyze any problematic policies one needs to know where exactly they occur instead of resorting to a generalized cry about systemic racism as the most characteristic feature of American society.

If the fact that African Americans tend to get lower prices for their houses than whites in the same area counts for “systemic racism,” what would be the suggested policy to correct the situation? The answer is hardly color-policing house prices, but rather long-term educational and social work to diminish the horrendous proportion of generally marginalized African American population.

There are harmful attitudes, but attitudes change during human history. Changes may appear slow, but Americans should not underestimate the immensity of changes in views of ethnic differences since the early 1960s. True, the atmosphere has changed for the worse during the last decade or so, even if partly thanks to the militancy of the new generation of race warriors. In Finland, a certain amount of xenophobia has existed from the very beginning of large-scale immigration to the country in the early 1990s—without any history of systemic racial segregation. In general, however, Finns appear to have fairly quickly adopted the central, individualistic values of multiculturalism.

At least Professor John McWhorter sees part of the problem resulting from attitudes among American blacks themselves, manifested in such notions as that “being a nerd isn’t authentically black.”¹⁶³ In evidence of harmful, typically intersectional assumptions, McWhorter claims that even African American authors are expected

to “write on the basis of our fundamental ‘identity’ as victims of whiteness, and if we don’t, we don’t know ‘who we are’ and have done the race a disservice in being asleep at the switch.”¹⁶⁴ He further asks his reader to name a nonfiction “book by a black American writer” that does not “address race or racism.” He knows of only two such writers in addition to himself.¹⁶⁵

Let us keep in mind that there is huge number of well-to-do African Americans today. Fatalistic attitudes about the limits of social mobility undermine one’s chances for social mobility, even if the attitudes themselves can be categorized as some kind of social construction. It is equally clear that pervasive social reforms of American society cannot be achieved by policies focused on black Americans alone. Inadequate income, lack of education, and poor housing conditions produce slums and criminality universally, not only among African Americans or only in American cities.

Claims, such as those made by the democratic presidential candidate Elizabeth Warren, that the entire American criminal justice “system is racist,” do not tell us much. No American law regarding the national justice system, obligatory education, healthcare, democratic elections, or the like allows ethnic discrimination.¹⁶⁶ If Americans truly wish to prevent biased juries, the judicial system itself should be submitted to a structural reform.

This is why Warren’s generalizing accusation with no legislative initiative would count as mere canvassing for black votes, which would turn her claim into an alternative fact itself and hence a target of ridicule for the Trumpists all around. Neither would the leftists much help themselves by accusing figures such as Bernie Sanders of being a “cis white man” with some inborn “privilege” that have “disqualified him from talking about political strategy choices in the Trump era.”¹⁶⁷

Most probably the crucial reason for the appalling proportion of marginalized people in American society lies in a misunderstanding of how modern-era capitalism views the labor force. It views it as a mere commodity among others that it needs for maximizing profits, which is why capitalism knows nothing of a minimum wage or of any imagined subsistence level wage. Hence, menial, assistant-level workers with no labor union to bargain for them should prepare to work in constant poverty.

This is the analytical conclusion drawn by the self-confessed, leading “socialist” of the country, Bernie Sanders. In fact, Sanders does not appear to promote socialism (at least in any substantive sense of the term), but the essentially fully capitalist, Nordic welfare model.

For the sake of clarity, it is worth noting that Finnish social democrats, for example, were the fiercest enemy of the national communist party from the late 1940s onward. They never aimed at a socialism without democratic institutions and the right to free speech. At least from the early 1970s onward it became evident to everyone that they do not aim at socialism at all.

The most famous American innovation in social policies, affirmative action, was born in the early 1960s as a strategy for the desegregation of a still legally racist American society. It gradually turned into a set of permanent social policy programs to help the African American minority (and others) to attain the average national level of social mobility.

However, having now been in place in various forms for over 60 years, affirmative action has proven catastrophically insufficient for its purpose. Not only has funding for affirmative action programs been deficient, but one should also ask whether these policies related to ethnic favoritism have been correctly targeted.

What seems evident is that any ethnic profiling of entrance applications for university education (whatever the exact legal forms) is a hopelessly delayed stage at which to correct the situation of any genuinely disadvantaged group of candidates. This is also why the Diversity, Equality and Inclusion (DEI) programs represent rather an ironic than a rational way to address the actual problems of equality and equity in American work places, colleges, and universities.

No positive change will be in view as long as the American primary educational system and all forms of social enhancement even potentially related to it (the number of teaching assistants, better pay for urban centers’ school teachers, the funding of better accommodation and social work in slum areas in general, and the like) remain as poorly arranged and resourced as they have been since the early days of desegregation in the 1960s.

We are dealing with a simple matter of failed national social politics, both in terms of funding and the fundamentally twisted way

of addressing actual socioeconomic problems. Intersectional jargon of racialization and of a white majority purposefully marginalizing colored minorities is but a new way to misunderstand African Americans' poor performance in competing (with all others) for better jobs and for better opportunities in a free American society.

There are sociopolitical reasons for this sad state of things. To grasp the roots of the intersectional misreading of those reasons, we need to take a look at how the intersectional concept of whiteness was originally developed.

THE BIRTH OF WHITENESS

As the critical race theorists' fundamental claim is that the American social order reflects "systemic racism," manifested not only in attitudes, but throughout American social structures, how would they define systemic racism working in a stunningly different Finnish social reality—with Finnish minimum 4-week paid vacations, with 60 percent of workers belonging to labor unions, with a 9-month guaranteed (paid) maternity leave, with free university education, with 3-year longer life expectancy than in the U.S., and similar differences?

If white supremacy is the crucial problem pervading the entire Western mentality and social thinking, how are the structural, socioeconomic differences between the United States and Finland to be accounted for in the first place? For this intersectional scholarship has no explanation. Let us next examine how the apparently self-explanatory, but analytically empty conception of whiteness was invented.

Noel Ignatiev's classic, *How the Irish Became White* (1995), helped creating the idea of whiteness as crucial for successful group behavior in American society. Ignatiev's book retails the story of how the poor, Catholic Irish immigrants began their social rise from the 1840s onward in the traditional context of white Anglo-Saxon Protestants (WASP) representing the American privileged class. In Ignatiev's saga of how the Irish "ceased to be green"¹⁶⁸ they were first accepted into the Whig party "club" and eventually into a "workingman's club" until becoming fully "white" Americans at the turn of the 20th century.

In his earlier writings in the somewhat exotic *Race Traitor* magazine, Ignatiev had already proclaimed that “the white race is a club” and that the main sociopolitical reform needed was hence “to dissolve the club, to break it apart, to explode it.”¹⁶⁹ He also formulated the main point about racial distinctions, later adopted by intersectional scholarship: “Race itself is a product of social discrimination,” given that people were not in the past “favored socially because they were white; rather they were defined as ‘white’ because they were favored.”¹⁷⁰ The old, liberal practice of admitting “the natural existence of ‘races’ even while opposing social distinctions among them” was doomed to fail, Ignatiev proclaimed.¹⁷¹

With Ignatiev, the origins of whiteness do not thus stem directly from 17th-century race theories, as many later whiteness theorists claim, but rather from the white elite groups’ blunt favoritism of people with the same skin color. Nevertheless, it remains mysterious how whiteness could be distinguished from any other kind of elitism or from people’s universal favoritism of group coherence throughout world history.

In sum, it is difficult to determine what is, in fact, meant by the notion of “race being a social construct,” say, regarding any notion of a genuine American elite, or a privileged class, which once apparently consisted of white Anglo-Saxon Protestants, while never including all Anglo-Saxon Protestants. Deep down, Ignatiev held that “the existence of the white race depends on the willingness of those assigned to it to place their racial interests above class, gender or any other interests they hold.”¹⁷²

Do white people truly act so? Even they appear to understand the basic difference between such African American political figures as Republican Condoleezza Rice and Democrat Barack Obama. It is notable, of course, that Democrats have traditionally been the weaker party among white American voters. Hillary Clinton gained only 39 percent of white voters in the 2016 presidential elections, even if Barack Obama gained as much as 45 percent in 2008.¹⁷³

True, because whiteness studies began in the United States, the field is still almost exclusively based on American historical experiences, even if with an often absurdly simplified view of American history. This trend was already clearly discernible in an

extensive review of early whiteness studies in the *Journal of American History* that Peter Kolchin wrote in 2002.

Kolchin's article includes summaries of the studies of such early authorities in the field as David R. Roediger and Frye Jacobson with mentions of many others, such as Barbara J. Fields. All the generalizations about the slavery system creating the race codes, the later rise of the studies of a specific Caucasian race, and eventually eugenics were covered—with personal reminiscences of the authors' own experiences of racism, typical of the intersectional line of argumentation ever since.

Instead of amounting to any kind of definition of the central concept of whiteness itself, the end result of early whiteness studies offered a medley of conclusions: Race itself was an “artifactual” construction,¹⁷⁴ but whiteness apparently not, because it was not “false,” but an “oppressive” and genuinely “destructive ideology,” although this “ideology” had also undergone significant changes in the course of American history.¹⁷⁵

A certain amount of militancy was also involved in whiteness studies from its very beginning. Since whiteness scholarship's ultimate goal was that of “abolishing whiteness” altogether, historian Grace Elizabeth Hale wondered whether America would still be “American without its white people,” given that it definitely “would be something better.”¹⁷⁶

The early whiteness studies' research results contain all the later simplifications of the intersectional whiteness paradigm, as Kolchin describes the situation in 2002:

Race appears as both real and unreal, transitory and permanent, ubiquitous and invisible, everywhere and nowhere, everything and nothing. Many of the whiteness studies authors are aware of this dualism and see it as a reflection of a similar dualism in whiteness itself. “Whiteness is everywhere in U.S. culture,” notes one, “but it is very hard to see”; “no one at this point really knows exactly what whiteness is,” assert two others, even while discussing its pervasiveness.¹⁷⁷

As in later intersectional studies, whiteness with its consequent racist social constructions was already “everywhere,” but remained “very hard to see.” Hence, as early as in 2002, “no one” really knew “what whiteness is.”

Such hollow research results suggest one thing. They suggest that the research question was wrong to begin with. In fact, whiteness studies scholars do not claim to study racism in American history, nor do they actually study white people. Rather, they study the entire history of the American social fabric via their own grand concept of whiteness (whatever it means).

One conclusion about the American whiteness studies historical approach would be that ethnic prejudices do not account for anything in world history prior to American slavery and the consequent, original formation of whiteness. Does whiteness account for the initiation of the African slave trade by the Portuguese? What should we think of ancient Egyptians in their paintings distinguishing themselves as red-brown from black Nubians?

If one is after somehow universally valid historical proofs for white men’s prejudiced notions of others why not begin with Aristotle? He thought that “barbarians” consisted of all those non-Greek nations who lacked the ability to build up a polity into the form of a city state (*polis*). If the presumption is that both white skin color and capitalist colonialism are the crucial elements for creating genuine prejudice, how is it possible that Zuni people’s name for their neighboring nation, Apache, meant simply an enemy?

In his review article of the topic Kolchin offers a historically sensitive conclusion by noting simply that demeaning attitudes among Americans toward, for example, Jews or Irish Catholics hardly entailed any kind of denial of their whiteness, given that “Americans have had many ways of looking down on people without questioning their whiteness.”¹⁷⁸ Consider, for example, how the Cajun culture was born in the backwoods of southern Louisiana after these distinctly white, but culturally alien people had been, during the 18th century, first driven from Canada, then out of New England, and then out of all other southern British colonies.

One might also reconsider the intersectional understanding of the origins of racism on the basis of Eric Williams’s remark from the 1940s: “Slavery was not born of racism: rather, racism was the

consequence of slavery. Unfree labor in the New World was brown, white, black, and yellow; Catholic, Protestant, and pagan.”¹⁷⁹ In other words, early scientific race theories resulted from the economic needs of the burgeoning African slavery system in colonial Americas. Most probably Africans were originally considered different from all other groups subject to unfree forms of labor, such as European indentured servants, precisely because they arrived on slave ships, and were thus distinguishable from all other arrivals to the Americas.¹⁸⁰

Why were Africans so quickly bound in inheritable slavery? In John Locke’s 1669 plan for “The Constitutions of Carolina” one finds that below the three upper orders there were yet common freeholders of whom only the richest would possess the right to vote for the representatives to the colony’s legislative body. Yet, above women, children, and slaves (who were guaranteed freedom of religion), there were also landless peasants, the leet-men of whom it was specifically noted that “all the children of leet-men shall be leet-men, and so to all generations.”¹⁸¹ While considered the only natural social ordering for humankind, the early modern society of orders was based on the idea of preventing any social mobility.

A popular, even if questionable proof among whiteness studies scholars that whiteness was specifically “constructed” or “produced” by the Euro-Americans is Benjamin Franklin’s memorandum from 1751.¹⁸² It is hardly surprising to find racist attitudes in a document written by a British colonist at a time when African slavery had been established in the colonies for an entire century. The memorandum is titled “Observations Concerning the Increase of Mankind.”¹⁸³

What Franklin is, in fact, considering in this document is how to regulate immigration to the British colonies. In addition to opposing the slave trade into the colonies, Franklin proposes restrictions for German immigration so as to prevent Pennsylvania from becoming culturally Germanized by the “Pennsylvania Dutch” (actually mostly German immigrants). He is skeptical that any non-British immigration would be beneficial for the cultural and economic development of the British colonies. Only at the end of the document does he bring up the issue of human races:

... the Number of purely white People in the World is proportionably very small. All *Africa* is black or tawny. *Asia* chiefly tawny. *America* (exclusive of the new Comers) wholly so. And in *Europe*, the *Spaniards*, *Italians*, *French*, *Russians* and *Swedes*, are generally of what we call a swarthy Complexion; as are the *Germans* also, the *Saxons* only excepted, who with the *English*, make the principal Body of White People on the Face of the Earth. I could wish their Numbers were increased. ... why increase the Sons of *Africa*, by Planting them in *America*, where we have so fair an Opportunity, by excluding all Blacks and Tawneys, of increasing the lovely White and Red? But perhaps I am partial to the Complexion of my Country, for such Kind of Partiality is natural to Mankind.¹⁸⁴

What does the text prove of Franklin's thinking? Clearly, he believes that his openly prejudiced thinking would appeal to his readership. He is equally open about his obvious lack of any epistemological basis for his own prejudices when admitting to being "partial to the complexion of" his own countrymen. Interestingly, he also refers to the indigenous population as both "tawny" and "red," probably resulting from his inability to imagine the complete disappearance of Native American nations.

All in all, Franklin here opposes immigration not only from Africa, but also from France, Germany, Sweden and from any other part of Europe, except the British Isles. As to why he classifies the Saxons as the only genuinely "white" Germans, it becomes evident that for him being an Anglo-Saxon in the early 1750s was the most important "racially" intersectional position. In the same document he makes openly disgraceful remarks about the Spanish being lazy, poor, and groundlessly proud of their imperialist achievements.

In sum, Franklin's text demonstrates sheer xenophobia regarding any but purely English immigration to the colonies. The reason for this is obvious. Franklin is interested in building up cultural unity among the colonists. It took several years after the publication of his memorandum for even the British and the French in the Seven Years War (1756–1763) to finally settle which one would be the main

imperialist power in North America. During the War of Independence Franklin himself was to enjoy his stay in Paris among “swarthy” French, whom he at the time encouraged to fight the absolutely white-skinned Englishmen.

As whiteness studies scholars would insist, Franklin’s text is no doubt “subjective,” but if anything, it is openly anti-multicultural in its sole purpose of making the colonies a culturally coherent and hence stronger political entity. Historically important in interpreting this fact is that no such ideal as multiculturalism yet existed. The earliest European advocates of anything “cross-cultural” were the 17th-century natural law philosophers with their early modern ideas of universal religious freedom, hoping to end the religious wars among European Christians.

Franklin’s whiteness “club” was restricted to Anglo-Saxon immigrants only. Again, cultural prejudices were not something people needed to be educated into. Zuni Indians were capable of that, so why would have the British colonists been any different? The Mongol invasion of the 11th century was hardly undertaken in the name of multicultural values either. When the Japanese conquered the Philippines in the WWII, they were quite open in assuring the Filipinos, whom they temporarily freed from the American imperialist rule, that “no matter how hard you try, you can never become white.”¹⁸⁵

Neither does Franklin’s memorandum provide much basis for any white-supremacy notions about the emperor of the “swarthy” French, Napoleon being nothing but “France’s biggest tyrant, an icon of white supremacy,” as Professor Marlene Daut of the University of Virginia calls him.¹⁸⁶ True, as Professor Daut is careful to note, during the Napoleonic wars perhaps tens of thousands of black Haitians were killed, but this “white supremacist” was also responsible for the deaths of approximately 700,000 swarthy Frenchmen in his efforts to defeat his white-skinned European enemies.

When the new American nation, still under the Articles of Confederation, was compelled to face its own multiethnicity, an anonymous Celadon pamphlet in 1785 foresaw an America divisible into “Nigrania,” “Savagenia,” “a French, a Spanish, a Dutch, an Irish, an English, &c. yea, a Jewish state here in process of time”—all those states, of course, to be “united in brotherly affection.”¹⁸⁷

Perhaps this retrospectively twisted image of the American future would today bring to mind, not the United States, but the world in the 2020s—divided, indeed, into Arabic states and a Jewish state in the Middle East, North African and Sub-Saharan African states, Asian state powers, and European nation states, among many others. Only brotherly affection is still in short supply. And it remains doubtful if the whiteness paradigm, based on blaming one ethnic group for the problems of all others, is intended to promote any such affection.

As late as the 18th century, white indentured servants were hunted just as African slaves were if they tried to escape to freedom before fulfilling their usually seven-year stint of compelled servitude. As for the notorious 18th-century race theories, few philosophers and natural scientists at a time could or cared to distinguish the concept of race from that of the species.

An antislavery slaveholder and an amateur scientist himself, Thomas Jefferson lamented the lack of interest among natural scientists in research on African and indigenous populations in America. He never suggested that African slaves, when freed and moved to a country of their own (his preferred choice being the rebellious Haiti), should not be given a fair chance to show their potential in progressive human development, benefitting from the Enlightenment promise to “increase the comforts, enlarge the understanding, and improve the morality of mankind.”¹⁸⁸

Nineteenth-century Social Darwinism, in turn, did not draw on racial distinctions, but on the individual capacities of people to adapt to their social environment. This is why it is best summarized in William Graham Sumner’s notorious, even if ethnically neutral maxim that “a drunkard in the gutter is just where he ought to be.”

Nor were the eugenics-based programs that governments developed in the early 20th century directly racial in focus. Eugenics had its roots in contemporary racial sciences, in Social Darwinism, and in the grand 19th-century trend of nationalism. Hence, eugenics came to be exercised by national programs of enhancing the general level of national health, intelligence, and the national capacities of survival, as well as of addressing the constant struggle against crime and drunkenness among lower classes. For curing such ills, health administrations across the United States and in numerous European

countries (Sweden included) began sterilization programs among various groups of disabled and convicts in the early 20th century.

Ethnicity had little, if anything to do with these programs. In the United States the numbers of compelled sterilizations of convicts, the disabled, and the mentally disturbed amounted to 60,000 cases, in Nazi-Germany to as many as 400,000 people.¹⁸⁹ By the end of WWII, however, eugenics disappeared from Western scientific thought, having never been part of mainstream liberalism. Despite what some popular/populist histories appear to maintain, the modern birth control programs have nothing to do with eugenics.

Whatever is supposed to make whiteness the most important theme in comprehending American and European history (and their legacies) is the philosophical problem that one should find an answer to in the theory of whiteness. Let us next take a critical look at the theoretical basis of intersectional race studies, again relying on intersectional scholars' own formulations of the matter.

WHITENESS SOCIOLOGY

Teresa Guess's article "The Social Construction of Whiteness: Racism by Intent, Racism by Consequence" (2006) well summarizes the typical conceptual arrogance and confusion within the novel academic field of the whiteness studies. Guess is straightforward about her "black/white binary paradigm." Her research question is about sociology's role in the Foucauldian "knowledge creation" regarding her own paradigm that allegedly "results in preservation or normalization of America's racial hierarchies."¹⁹⁰

The ethnic groups that we are supposed to think of in terms of her "black/white paradigm" would be American Indians and Alaska Natives representing currently mere 1,3 percent of the entire population, Euro-Americans 58,9 percent, African Americans 13,6 percent, Latinos 19,1 percent, and all others comprising the remaining 7,1 percent.¹⁹¹

Following, if not creating, the customary whiteness studies strategy, Guess is not interested in Neo-Nazis or in other far-right white supremacist groups. It is the unintentional racism of the Americans—discriminating against all non-white Americans—that is under scrutiny in her sociology. She calls this national disease "racism by consequence," and finds it "reflected in different educational

opportunities, economic differentials between whites and non-whites, residential segregation, health care access, and death rate differentials between whites and non-whites.”¹⁹²

Does this mean that intersectional sociology can explain the current social injustices in the United States without a single reference to American social politics since the demise of systematized racial segregation in the 1960s? It means exactly that. Like many other intersectional race theorists Guess claims to be studying “whiteness” in the sense of “what it means to be white.”¹⁹³

Such a goal might perhaps be occasionally fruitful, if whiteness scholars cared to distinguish between, say, a white slaveholder of the 18th-century Virginia, a white KKK-member of the 1920s in Illinois, and a genuine white liberal of the same era, and to distinguish the era of systematized racial segregation from post-1960s American history. We could, hence, be studying white racism in its various forms and in its often-unintended sociopolitical consequences across America, across the Western world, and perhaps even across “the global community” historically—meaning that even racism is always to be studied in some particular place and time.

But this is precisely what whiteness studies scholars refuse to do. They are after large-scale sociological generalizations in which whiteness appears as an extra-historical evil of the entire human race—at least since the colonial era and regardless of any later desegregation policies. This also means that eventually the research subject itself turns into an explanation for what it was supposed to study. Let us next examine how this odd transformation tends to take place.

How does Guess arrive at her black/white binary paradigm? Employing such general sociological concepts as “social constructions” and “social facts” she formulates her case thus:

Discussion of the social construction of *whiteness* cannot be complete unless we acknowledge the social and political significance of “race” in America. Whatever its scientific validity, “race” is a social fact in which the social and political significance of *whiteness* plays a critical role. Classical scholars have remarked about “race” as a

social fact. Thus, according to Durkheim, the concepts, “race” and *whiteness*, are social facts.¹⁹⁴

We have here such “social constructions” as “whiteness” and such “social facts,” as “race”—both (typically for intersectional scholarship) drawn from late-imperialist-era social science. Both Émile Durkheim and Max Weber are mentioned, although they probably never said anything about “whiteness,” or showed any particular interest in contemporary racial sciences of the turn of the 20th century.

What is the argumentative basis for Guess’s conceptualizations? Hardly any sociologist would deny the “social fact” that people believe in all kinds of “constructions” of their own imagination and sometimes even share such shadow worlds of their own creation. Would not the Center for UFO Studies (CUFOS) in Illinois or the European Committee for Homeopathy be both “social constructions” and “social facts” by the same criteria?

As for the author’s given binary paradigm of black and white “races,” which oddly excludes all other non-whites, although they are included elsewhere in the article, one may ask why the term ethnicity (mentioned once in the article, but not commented upon) cannot be used. Would not the term ethnicity cover the fact that there are African Americans, Asian Americans, Finnish-Americans, Polish-Americans, black and white Protestant Americans, and the like groups? Ethnic classifications, even if used in terms of a binarity, would not carry the burden of the already generally rejected, colonial-era racial theories, and would hence eliminate the need for speaking of “race.” The author herself uses quotation marks for the term “race” throughout the article.

The conceptual flexibility shown by whiteness scholars is truly amazing. Guess, for example, cites approvingly Homi K. Bhabha’s statement that, “the critique of *whiteness* ... attempts to displace the normativity of the white position by seeing it as a strategy of authority rather than an authentic or essential ‘identity.’” So, whiteness is not an authentic identity, but only a strategy for oppressing non-white people, which is why its “normativity” must be displaced.¹⁹⁵ How can the author, nevertheless, conclude (even if several pages later) that, “white identity defines itself in opposition

to inferior others"?¹⁹⁶ Is whiteness an identity or not? And if "racism, then, becomes the maintenance of white identity,"¹⁹⁷ as Guess also claims, what is her definition of whiteness to begin with? Are we truly supposed to commit ourselves as social scientists or humanities scholars to the conclusion that, indeed, "no one at this point really knows what whiteness is," whereas "racialization" would automatically make sense to all us?¹⁹⁸

After thus validating that Guess does not know what her central research concept means, we may proceed to investigate how she draws this mystic concept from a whole set of sociological theoretic fine points. First, one needs the ever-fashionable Foucauldian discourse analysis. Guess's approach to the concept sounds somewhat far-fetched: "discourse analysis of knowledge about 'race' and *whiteness* must take into account the saliency of Social Darwinism in social science theorizing about 'race' and *whiteness*."¹⁹⁹ Are we supposed to believe that Social Darwinism is needed to establish such a social construction as whiteness? Who among modern sociologists would today embrace Social Darwinism?

Moreover, it is worth asking what is particularly ethnic or racist in Social Darwinism. As noted, Graham Sumner's famous slogan that "a drunkard in the gutter is just there where he ought to be," refers to any individual human being who fails in the battle for the survival. There is no inherent racism involved in the principle. It represents extreme individualism turned into pseudoscientific sociobiology, to which no serious sociologist (black or white or of some other color) has subscribed for about 100 years. Guess does not attempt to explain herself in this respect. It remains equally unclear if she truly believes in some "saliency" of Social Darwinism in current Western thought.

Guess goes on to complaining that the "endogamy," a term which she picks up from Weber, has "become a primary mechanism for the perpetuation of 'races' in America."²⁰⁰ That such a general cultural norm as endogamy should be condemned for enabling ethnic groups to remain ethnic is absurd, unless the suggestion is that such groups should entirely vanish by melting into one another. Are Jewish people who prefer marrying other Jews and hence remain a specific cultural group therefore to be accused of racism? Should we perhaps prefer arranged marriages in the name of ultimate desegregation?

Multiculturalism—as we have been taught for decades—was supposed to celebrate differences in terms of cultural richness among us.

It is equally odd for Guess to lean on Durkheim for her conclusion that “the hereditary transmission of innate, group-level characteristics—racial structures—is supplanted by the social transmission of learned abilities—acquired structures—and by individual-level abilities—individual structures.”²⁰¹ Whatever the ultimate message of this sentence, one may wonder what can be meant by the notion of “abilities” turning into “structures.” It is not a bit easier to grasp Guess’s claim that “the sociologist might regard racial distinction as a special case of invidious status differentiation,”²⁰² given that Western scientific thought has not committed to any such racial distinctions for about 100 years. Where today could “the sociologist” she is speaking of to be found?

Guess’s struggle with the term “race” is worth special attention. She first cites approvingly another sociologist claiming that “sociological understanding ... will make clear that the very concept of ‘race’ is nothing but a fiction to begin with, and perhaps helps make clear that the real problem is how to be a human being.”²⁰³ Then sociologist Guess goes on to claim—contrary to this sociological “fiction to begin with”—that “part of our commonsense knowledge about ‘race’ and *whiteness* in America is that interaction between the ‘races’ is generally perceived in terms of hierarchical relations between blacks and whites.”²⁰⁴ Incidentally, even the American Census Bureau still uses “race” as a synonym for ethnic minorities and majorities, but guarantees free individual choice of one’s “race.”²⁰⁵

In order to explain this presumptive given hierarchy in sociological terms, Guess next turns to Anthony Giddens’s structuration theory. First she notes that a “social structure conventionally appears in literature as a concept disembodied from actors who participate in its creation, reproduction, and transformation.”²⁰⁶ By contrast, Giddens in the 1980s (partly following Simmel’s studies of the 1950s) saw such structures in terms of social processes among the actors involved. One wonders if social constructionism had not before Giddens grasped this historical

character of social structures as constantly changing (Weber knew that). Be that as it may, this is how Guess goes on to explain the case:

Structuration refers to the process of constructing, ordering, and routinizing of social relations across time and space, in virtue of the duality of structure (Giddens 1984:374). In Giddens, the duality of structure refers to the observation that actors are as much producers as they are also products of society's structurations.²⁰⁷

So, with the notion of “across time and space” we have the elemental understanding of social structures as historically specific and continuously changing conceptions of ourselves, of our society, and of other people in our society.

But how does Guess herself use this notion of historically specific “structurations”? To cite one case, she claims that “social actors were involved in constructing laws, rules, and regulations that created structured social relations during Slavery, Reconstruction, Jim Crow and the Civil Rights eras.”²⁰⁸ Here we have a cautionary example of what exactly a historical conceptualization of a concept or a structure does not mean.

For Guess the 1865 abolition of slavery, the 1890s rise of racial segregation to replace slavery-era racial control, and 1960s desegregation policies are not genuine historical changes at all. They appear as mere phases of a mysteriously given, extra-historically consistent narrative of American national racism. No wonder, then, that for Guess “the social facts of ‘race’, racism, and white-skin privilege have become increasingly institutionalized features of American society since the 17th Century.”²⁰⁹

Suddenly, all that American history can prove is that racism and white-skin privilege have, in fact, *increased* regardless of the 1865 abolition of slavery and the 1960s adoption of desegregation policies—and afterward. Has there ever been any non-hidden, visible positive change, then? Is it not a mark of a positive development that a number of black, female sociologists hold university positions in the country today?

Here Guess, intentionally or accidentally, confuses two totally different historical trends with one another when speaking of “increasingly institutionalized” features of modern society. One should be able to distinguish between racism and increasingly institutionalized control of people in general. Thus, one may just as well claim that factually decreasing racism result from the continuously increasing (institutional-based) control that modern society exercises upon all of us—usually totally regardless of our ethnicity. If an American jury convicts an African American to prison on a more lenient basis than a white defendant, we are not speaking of institutional or systemic racism, but of racist attitudes.

Are we doomed to whiteness? Is there any way that its evil grip on us all can decrease at all unless whiteness is wiped away totally? Notably, all this is allegedly a sociological problem of unintentional racism and has nothing to do with intentional racism by actual white supremacists. “To talk about racism by intent is moot and somewhat unproductive,” Guess calmly notes.²¹⁰

Her message is, nevertheless, confusingly militant for a professional sociologist including proclamations such as that “it is no exaggeration to maintain that racial peace in the twenty-first century will depend on Whites’ developing the willingness to listen and make meaning from what they hear.” The purpose is that “the meaning-making process in which Whites must engage will require that for the first time they will accept the presence of non-White culture.”²¹¹

Again, the precise meaning of what is stated remains mysterious. What is expected of such a non-white culture—an African American statehood as once advocated by the most radical sections of the Black Panthers? Or, are we after some kind of cultural independence only—as if jazz, African American literature, rap music, African American actors, basket ball players and athletics, or the Black History Month have not been acknowledged and embraced nationwide?

There is no American minority more thoroughly researched and discussed than the African American one. In sum, what set of folkways are we talking about for the African American culture to comprise a genuinely “non-white” culture, provided that it would remain part of the American or North American cultural landscape

to begin with? Very few African Americans live in Antarctica, Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe, or South America.

The fundamental problem for Guess, however, remains that “in addition to racialization, a major organizing principle in the structuration of American ‘race’ relations is asymmetric power relations between whites and non-whites.”²¹² Her example of these asymmetric power relations consists of the poor government policies in helping the victims of hurricane Katrina in 2005. These allegedly prove Americans’ profound racism, as if the American government has ever been particularly good at helping the poor even in their daily struggles for subsistence. The same, allegedly profoundly racist American people twice voted for Barack Obama as president of the United States, in 2008 and 2012.

If power relations are the subject, perhaps American majoritarian democracy should be put under the looking glass. This Guess is not interested in doing. Instead, she concludes, “the structural properties of ‘race,’ racialization, racism, white-skin privilege, and asymmetric relations become transformed into structural principles of social organization which constitute the social system of American ‘race’ relations.”²¹³

Is America a mere social system of race relations? If it is, we are dealing with something genuinely heinous, particularly given that race has been rejected as a scientific concept 100 years ago, even by white American scientists.

But let us recall Guess’s original definition of the sociological “race problem.” It was that “racism by consequence,” is “reflected in differential educational opportunities, economic differentials between whites and non-whites, residential segregation, health care access, and death rate differentials between whites and non-whites” in America today.²¹⁴ In other words, all these differentials were the result of unintentional racism, and hence, a mere matter of sociological structures called whiteness and racism.

In sum, we began with whiteness studies allegedly studying the meaning of being white, although with the provision that whiteness itself represents racist thinking. The conclusion, therefore, was that all American inequalities result from the “fact” that white people are racists, even if only “by consequence” of being white. If this is not circular reasoning, what is? To repeat, we are all

opinionated, but the most elemental methodological rules are not a matter of opinion—not even in social sciences and the humanities.

Most conspicuously, social politics do not appear to belong to the field of sociology at all for Guess—at least if the main purpose of intersectional sociology is that of maintaining ethnic tensions rather than examining the reasons for such tensions. Eventually, the hideous whiteness is defined as (Guess cites here both Joe Kincheloe and *Race Traitor* magazine) “a social construction” in which “the Irish, Italians, and Jews have all been viewed as non-white in particular places at specific moments in history”, thus constructing “a private club, which grants privileges to certain people in return for obedience to its rules.”²¹⁵

No suggestion is made as to why the blacks were allegedly never included into “the club.” The reason for this implicit conclusion is that the 1960s desegregation legislation, 60-year-old affirmative action policies, and the very principle of colorblindness (supported by Martin Luther King, Jr. contrary to intersectional scholars) are simply not interesting enough to count at all in Guess’s structuration-oriented sociology.

We have, once again, arrived at a reading of history in which various sociopolitical elites (throughout the early modern and modern eras) and whiteness appear mere synonyms without anything close to a historical interest in how Western countries developed into multicultural democracies with individual human rights—those rights naturally resting on the colorblind principle so as to be human rights.

Is it totally beyond the sociologist imagination to think that intentional social policy choices have had something to do with the fact that people of ethnic minorities, and the poor in general, tend to belong to the marginalized groups in American society even after 60 years of the active desegregation policies? Could it be that the policies themselves were faulty in some respects?

If the ultimate reason for our problems is that “white identity defines itself in opposition to inferior others,” and that “racism, then, becomes the maintenance of white identity,”²¹⁶ have we truly been doing sociology or studying only some particular form of sociopathology among the ethnic group of people called the whites? Should we shift to studying only white people’s mental health?

If such conceptions as whiteness can be validly proven to exist only for the sociologists of whiteness itself, should we not dismiss the entire field as useless for the rest of us? At least it does not appear capable of providing new knowledge for any effectual social politics.

We have, again, encountered the general incapacity of intersectional scholars to discern the functional differences between economic, political, social, societal, literary, and even psychological constructions. For example, the structures of political, representative democracy have impact on almost everything in our lives, and those political power structures vary even among Western countries. In none of them do the political structures determine all our societal attitudes, social norms, or economic opportunities. People in Western democracies constantly disagree about proper social attitudes, norms, economic policies, and occasionally about developing those very political structures.

Speaking of the so-called deep structures, the use of “programs” in American political vocabulary is interesting. The very idea of solving a problem of social justice with a particular “program” (e.g., the 1960s “War on Poverty”) indicates that both the problem and its solution are perceived as temporary. This is fundamentally different from the Nordic model, which is structured to keep on solving the ever-present socioeconomic problems of society through the society’s structural arrangements—arrangements that themselves remain under constant need of reform.

What would a proper structural analysis look like? Consider such an apparently simple thing as modern democracy. It does not consist of the principle of the majority rule alone. It also entails our commitment to recurrent elections, to various other direct and representative democratic practices, individual human rights, and minority rights—all of them distinct components of the system as a whole. That every modern democracy tends to function under equally modern, capitalist economic conditions provides yet another aspect of that whole and its parts, not to mention what people themselves think of all this, and of innumerable other possible aspects of the modern life under democratic rule.

Even so, prior to attempting an analysis of the modern democratic political systems that would include all these components

one must understand democracy itself. Yes, it is a power structure. Yes, it is based on majority rule. Yet, the other aspects define what it truly is today—even as a power structure.

In their discussions of such concepts as gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation as well as power, poverty, majority rule, and even our use of language, intersectional scholars manage, in fact, explain only one and the same thing about them all. It is that all these conceptions as well as everything else on earth appears to be in some kind of interaction with everything else within the dogmatically holistic, intersectional mode of thought. Anyone asking of this “So what?” is asking the right question. In fact, we do not even know whether everything is in any meaningful way interacting with everything else. At least some relation between the causes and effects of a thing must be shown before anything of it can be explained.

Let me illustrate the basis of this accusation. A change may be epochal in itself on the level of political structures while having little or no effect, say, on economic ones. Consider the famous Obamacare (the Affordable Care Act), which, after decades of battle, eventually offered every American equal access to healthcare services. To achieve this, all Americans (the poor with government subsidies) were required to purchase themselves an actual (not only nominal) healthcare insurance program—which poor people had not been able to afford at all, and for which millions of those permanently ill had not qualified to begin with, no matter how much they would have paid for it.

That the poor are qualified for government subsidies for purchasing their insurance, as Obamacare provides, means that the richer taxpayers partly pay for their insurance as well. It nevertheless sounds only fair and just that the richest country in the world should eventually guarantee all its citizens healthcare services. What keeps the system comparatively expensive, however, is the fact that private health insurance companies must also get their profits out of the national program, particularly given that any purely public (tax-funded) healthcare providers were not included in the original reform bill.

As to the social and socioeconomic “structures” intersectional scholarship so foment about, one must keep in sight another fact. American insurance companies consented to the

Affordable Care Act, because—even while being on the losing side in terms of mere cost-efficiency (obligated as they were to enroll the chronically ill)—they increased their overall profits when the clientele suddenly increased with millions of poor customers whose insurance other American taxpayers partly paid for. The capitalist economic structures themselves were not touched with the Obamacare.

Americans now enjoy universal healthcare, which still, on its fundamental structural level, differs remarkably from that of most European countries precisely in assuring the economic profit of the private insurance companies and private healthcare providers. Unlike a Finn, an American may still go bankrupt because of inadequate coverage for a serious illness. The public Finnish system knows no cost sharing principles and places no maximum limit on health care benefits.

Moreover, the U.S. government still refuses to bargain with the pharmaceutical industry for their often extravagantly pricy medicines, which means that even with the current universal healthcare system American asthma patients pay twice as much for their medicines as asthma patients living in countries such as Canada, Finland, or Italy.

Even a dramatic a change in just one structural element of society may have no practical effect on other structures at all. Hence, it is methodologically irrational in analytic thinking to cling to such a doctrinaire belief as that everything intersects or has somehow meaningful effect on everything else. To explain any topic, be it economic inequality, gender inequality, political inequality, or, say, an ethnic difference, it must always be assessed in its particular place and time.

Let us next consider the notion of racialization itself so as to establish how it is related to that presumed mother of all world evils, the curse of whiteness.

RACIALIZATION OR ETHNICITY

Let us first establish that it is the sociology of racism itself that intentionally aims, against current scientific views, to reinvigorate the use of the term “race.” After noting that, indeed, modern science

does not recognize races at all, Matthew Clair and Jeffrey S. Denis, as authors of an encyclopedic “Sociology of Racism” state that

Races are distinguished by perceived common physical characteristics, which are thought to be fixed, whereas ethnicities are defined by perceived common ancestry, history, and cultural practices, which are seen as more fluid and self-asserted rather than assigned by others (Cornell and Hartmann, 2006). Thus, Asian is usually considered a ‘race’, whereas Tibetans and Bengalis are considered ethnicities. Although ethnicity and nationality often overlap, a nationality, such as American, can contain many ethnic groups (e.g., Italian-Americans, Arab-Americans).²¹⁷

Claiming that “Asian is usually considered a ‘race’ whereas Tibetans” are not so considered is an odd generalization to be made by North American academics in the 2020s. Why should we think of such differences in terms of races to begin with? The authors go on to assert their crucial notion that “all three categories—race, ethnicity, and nationality—are socially constructed, and, as such, groups once considered ethnicities have come to be seen as races and vice versa.”

Again, we are dealing with “categories” and “social constructions,” but we are particularly dealing with the idea that someone somewhere wishes to consider ethnicities as races and “vice versa.” Notably, that someone is not to be found among white or black Western scientists, but among the typical intersectional racial studies scholars.

Hence, the race studies theorists are themselves interested in keeping the old, 18th-century racist categories alive in order to identify them as “socially” constitutive for different minorities and majorities even today. In order to conceal this somewhat astonishing fact, they need only claim that the actual culprit is their mysterious entity of “whiteness as a structural form of oppression.”²¹⁸

Indeed, British professor John Preston insists that “race” has been “used as a form of capital which is used in classed/raced forms of exploitation,” and represents “structural oppression” as created by “whiteness” itself.²¹⁹ Consequently, whiteness, as a global social

force, appears capable of not only unintentional racism of consequence (as with Guess), but (with Preston) also of “racial exploitation,” “class exploitation,” “labor’s exploitation,” and eventually of “super exploitation of people of color.”²²⁰

Unsurprisingly, Finnish intersectional scholars also speak of the global “racialized order” in the Nordic countries,²²¹ and of the “racialized power relations” in Finland.²²² They similarly speak of Finnish “racialized minorities,”²²³ and of how Finnish history renders “contemporary racialized and ethnized inequalities” invisible.²²⁴ No wonder their American high priest, Robin DiAngelo, is convinced that white American “progressives cause more daily harm” to African Americans than the openly racist “white nationalists.”²²⁵

In addition, all our sexualities have been “racialized” by the European “colonial conquest in Africa, Asia, and the Americas,” Professor Jillian Hernández informs us. Hence, we still wallow among the images of “insatiable lust and spitfire of Black and Latina women, the sexual submissiveness of Asian women, the lack of Asian men and the predatory sexualities of Black men,” which all “stem from centuries of discursive circulation in fields ranging from biology to anthropology.”²²⁶ Typically again, the current sciences of biology and anthropology are also to be accused of what they explicitly have disclaimed for the last 100 years. Is there any evil in the world that white colonialism cannot be blamed for?

Like many other similar academic writings, Preston’s book on Whiteness “pedagogy” from 2012 refers over twenty times to eugenics, as if it had not been wiped out of scientific books (Western or otherwise) long ago. In explaining how “whiteness as a structural form of oppression” manifests itself as “commodification of bodies as ‘raced’” thus allowing “‘race’ to be used as a form of capital which is used in classed/raced forms of exploitation,” his argumentation regarding any cause-and-effect relation gets genuinely difficult to follow.²²⁷

The relation of our bodily images to the hideous whiteness, as explained by John Preston, is among the most exotic intersectional tenets:

The ruling class, white, masculine body in elite English public schools can be considered to be in tension between being visibly white and the weakness of

corporeality ... Rather than being ‘born white’, whiteness has to be made which involves punishing the corporeal body through hard physical exercise and punishment. This reaffirms the body as ‘white’ through its transcendence of corporeality. The body is not significant and whiteness (seemingly) comes from within as if it were ‘white spirit’. Ultimately, the overcoming and simultaneous reinscribing of whiteness requires whiteness to be written against the ‘other’.²²⁸

This somewhat far-fetched metaphysics of whiteness turning into a “white spirit” by transcending its own corporeality is, of course, not assumed to occur only in British elite schools.

American sociologist Shamus Khan, as British sociologist Mike Savage reports, has noticed that in American elite schools the devilish production of whiteness no longer draws on the classic Kantian teachings about knowledge, the sublime, and the categorical imperative, but now concentrates merely on “juggling, getting by, game playing, and being strategic.”²²⁹ This is, in Savage’s eyes, the reason why “the embodied, physical qualities of privileged elites—who turn out to be overwhelmingly male, often white or from a dominant ethnic group, and from advantaged families—becomes an increasing object of hostile attention” in the world.²³⁰

In fact, there is no scientific proof for any of this metaphysics about white bodies first embodying nothing but whiteness and then absorbing such embodiment into the minds of those white bodies so as to enable them to oppress the entire rest of humankind.

To further prove the ultimate irrationality of intersectional racial thinking, let us quote Kirsten Weir’s statement from a psychology journal published by the American Psychological Association:

“It’s well established that there’s no biological basis for race,” said Diane Hughes, PhD, a professor of applied psychology at New York University. “Race has meaning because we give it meaning—especially in the U.S., where our history is largely structured to uphold these ‘racial differences,’” she said. “We assume that there are

unobservable underlying personality traits that correlate to certain physical characteristics.”²³¹

An odd set of claims manage to be made in this short quotation. The first claim appears to be that without American slavery and the long national history of racial segregation no racial or ethnic differences would exist in the world to begin with, as if we do not know that differences in skin pigment among different groups of people have a clear-cut genetic basis.²³² After ignoring this simple fact with no logical reason, the next claim is that we all still (as if racists by nature) assume that those particular “physical characteristics” of people correlate to some given “underlying personality traits,” although the very existence of racial differences was refuted in the first part of the argument.

As the father of an adopted son of Asian origins, my experiences invalidate all the above claims. First, of course, I noticed the physical differences between my son and myself. In a month, however, I ceased noticing them at all and concentrated on raising him as simply the most important individual of my life besides myself. Today, he lives on his own and studies art in Helsinki.

Yet another race theory specialist, Hannah Noel, insists that “there is nothing biological about race; it is an ideology given meaning and constituted through discourse.”²³³ What kind of discourse are we speaking of here? It is a discourse created by intersectional scholarship on its own. This scholarship wishes to reinvigorate a concept of race that biologists and social scientist across the world abandoned decades ago.

In fact, no historical or other metaphysics can force us to “racialize” people around us today. Only intersectional whiteness scholars are keen on doing so, alongside only one other school of equally exotic thinkers, the few Neo-Nazis, even if those are considered too insignificant to be analyzed at all by the intersectional scholars themselves.

Instead of speaking of Neo-Nazis, the above-mentioned Hannah Noel, in her monograph, *Deflecting Whiteness* (2022), begins her structural analysis of Western, liberal society by first introducing the reader to the 1930s Nazi ideology as its logical perfection point.

Did or did not all the central Western democracies spend five years in crushing that particular “power structure” during WWII?

In her article, “Unmaking ‘Extreme’ and ‘Ordinary’ Whiteness” (2019), Finnish intersectional scholar, Minna Seikkula, provides us an intimidating example of the now globalized pathology of whiteness. She finds it newly present among all Finns who have not yet fully grasped the antiracist way of living, although new migrant groups have poured into the country since the early 1990s.

By means of the large-scale conceptual generalization of “white-normativity, or whiteness as ordinariness” Seikkula manages to provide a stunning picture of Finnish society as entirely and inherently racist. In Finland, she argues, “racialized differences are often addressed through the euphemistic distinction between ‘Finns’ and ‘immigrants,’ and therefore Finnishness is conflated with whiteness.”²³⁴

One may wonder whether this logic would not mean assessing any xenophobic attitude among Finns as racist. To paraphrase Benjamin Franklin, I have never heard of a Finn, drunk or sober, suggesting that Finnish Russian immigrants are in some mystified sense less white than other Finns.

This is all the more conspicuous given that people of Russian origin comprise today approximately one fifth of all Finnish immigrants, even if their actual proportion of the entire population amounts to only an approximate 1,6 percent (87,000). They are nevertheless a sizable minority compared to the much more discussed Finnish minorities of Romani and Sami people, each representing an approximate 0,2 percent.²³⁵

Let us take a brief look at how Seikkula handles her evidence for Finnish racism, while simultaneously bringing forth (unintentionally) the somewhat paranoid nature of the whiteness paradigm itself. In Finland, Seikkula argues, the existence of openly homophobic, misogynist, and anti-Muslim white supremacy groups only “masks a more overarching normative whiteness,” whereas it is this overarching normative (liberal) whiteness that “reduces non-whiteness into a particularity.”²³⁶

Seikkula’s thesis is that even Finnish antiracism activists are victims of the overwhelmingly predominant “normative whiteness,” which for any Finns under its spell makes them unknowingly or

unconsciously treat all minorities as something less than normal Finns. Seikkula provides qualitatively interpreted interview material to prove that even committed antiracists fail to truly question the “racialized hierarchies” of Finnish welfare society.

A 40-year-old Finnish man, Pasi, as Seikkula tells us, became interested in antiracism when he encountered a situation in which three adult Finnish men harassed Somali school girls at a bus stop in 2011. Pasi confesses to the interviewer that he “got worried about what is gonna happen to this country.” From the whiteness studies point of view this statement reveals that “for Pasi, the episode expands into threatening the future of the nation state,” because such an “episode of adult men attacking children at a bus stop interrupts the status quo in ‘nice’ Finland.”²³⁷

Even more unfortunately, the incident “does not lead Pasi to take an interest in the attacked children’s everyday reality,” who thus “remain minor characters, as the focus is on confronting ‘racists,’ instead of seeking solidarity with people who experience racism.” The reader is here left guessing if Pasi should have grown interested in the girls personally, in their Somali culture, or in their religious culture. Are we truly multicultural only when we become cultural studies experts or personally befriend people representing one or another minority culture?

Seikkula’s other three interviewees are equally helpless to overcome their inborn whiteness. Among them is Maria, who, according to the Neo-Nazis is an overly tolerant, “toletard cunt,” who they hope would be raped and killed by Muslim immigrants. Alas, even “Maria’s story affirms rather than unpacks the default deference to white ordinariness and extreme whiteness.” Eventually, after similarly explicating other antiracists’ personal inadequacies, the author brings up “Leyla, a hijab-wearing woman of color in her 20s” who is to redefine “both the narrative’s point of emphasis, and the way in which its characters are regarded.”²³⁸

With her immigrant background, Leyla alone appears capable of offering the missing piece of Finnish antiracist thinking so as to make it capable of “dismantling racialization” and incorporating this intersectional piece of faith into their “agenda.” The essential end result of Seikkula’s research article is that even Finnish antiracists remain guilty in not resenting their own whiteness while fighting the

Neo-Nazis. In other words, they do not yet fully believe in and confess to their own, intersectional racialization of all humankind.

Leyla is openly bitter about the fact that antiracists do not know what, if any role Sharia law has in the life of Finnish Muslims, “if I don’t say it.”²³⁹ One might ask, who cannot be reasonably expected to explain oneself in an open society, when asked to do so? Finnish atheists constantly need to explain their convictions in the country, which still today remains 75 percent Lutheran.

A Finnish transwoman, Jade Nyström, does not appear to understand the fine points of intersectional faith either, when arguing that the main problem is that people ignorant of transsexuality “do not dare to ask,” because that is so often taken as an additional reason “to feel offended.”²⁴⁰ Multiculturalism should never be about silencing other people.

Given my experiences as a university teacher, one may wonder if the so-called natural-born Finnish intersectional scholars understand their own Western culture any better than the newly arrived immigrants. If one wishes to know what “categories” (which intersectional scholarship is so enthusiastic about) in any traditional sense of the term mean, why not begin with Immanuel Kant’s categories of modality, relation, quantity, and quality? Or, if one wishes to grasp which fundamental logical distinctions intersectional methodology ignores (whether intentionally or out of sheer ignorance) why not begin distinguishing the Kantian notions of morality, knowledge, and aesthetics?

No modern system of knowledge (at least until intersectionality) has refuted the distinction between knowing how things ought to be from how they are or confused the notion of the beautiful with the other two. As for the Kantian notion of the sublime (as even potentially overcoming these distinctions), it is extremely difficult to find any of that in the simple-mindedly moralistic theoretical tenets of intersectionality.

Finally, let us briefly examine the actual contents of the mystic doctrine of racialization itself. Adam Hochman, an Australian scholar, has written a profound intersectional defense of it, titled “Racialization: a defense of the concept” (2019). This is his conclusion:

The concept of racialization offers an alternative to the concept of racial formation. Its companion concept, racialized group, offers an alternative to the category of race. The concept of the racialized group, unlike “race,” has the benefit of highlighting the historical contingency of racialization. As J.L.A. Garcia explains, while a “race” is something one has, “racialization is something that is done to a group, by some social agent, at a certain time, for a given period, in and through various processes, and relative to a particular social context” (Garcia 2003, 285; see also Ludwig 2018). The language of “racialization” is therefore less likely to perpetuate false beliefs about the naturalness of racial classification than standard race-talk.²⁴¹

What is stated here? The thesis is that “racial formation” should be displaced in favor of the concept of “racialization,” because racialization is more fluid in adopting to various historical contexts specifying who does the racialization to whom—including the important option of “self-racialization,” which the author brings up later on.

Whether the concept of racialization would help us in avoiding false beliefs about race as a natural or biologically definable feature of any group of people may, however, appear questionable. We already have a concept for this, which is ethnicity.

What Hochman wishes to argue is basically this: it would be utopian thinking to imagine us capable of entirely letting go of the concept of race. Racialization, however, covers the phenomenon in question most extensively, both in terms of the hegemonic “scientific” racialization of the 18th century (Immanuel Kant gets the honor of inventing it with Hochman) and in terms of self-racialization in the current, more positive sense of the term.²⁴²

The ultimate trick, however, is not to entirely break away from the biological aspects of the term. In Hochman’s view, cases such as that of Rachel Dolezal, who was forced to resign from NAACP because she falsely claimed to be an African American, validly prove that even self-racialization implies the notion of biological inheritance as part of the concept of race itself.²⁴³

Hochman, however, manages to evade this crucial element of ethnicity itself, namely that most forms of ethnic grouping tend to include the aspect of biological inheritability. No matter how an individual might identify oneself ethnically, other people might exclude the person from their group on the basis of bloodline alone.

Let me clarify (and partially solve) this ultimate dilemma of inclusion and exclusion related to ethnic identification. I suggest approaching it from the simple (traditional) ethnic point of view in terms of first, human rights, and second, cultural rights.

First, regarding modern individual human rights, we know that there are some, even if few visible genetic differences between certain groups of people, including variations of skin color and some other physical features. Ever since dropping the entire category of race from use long ago—due to its scientifically untenable presumptions—mainstream Western social sciences gave up categorizing human beings into any other than *culturally definable* ethnic groups.

The reason for adopting this policy was the simple realization that any ethnic background of an individual does not, scientifically speaking, tell anything about that person's individual inclinations, talents, intelligence, or overall patterns of thinking. The intersectional race theory attempts to reverse this situation by clinging to the concept of racialization instead of ethnic, cultural differences.

Regarding minority rights, the membership of any ethnic group is, in fact, simply a matter of cultural rights. Ethnic identities are hence partly dependent on both the individual right to define one's cultural ethnicity and on the group's right to determine its outer limits regarding other ethnic cultural groups.

Only when another person's visible features alone suggest to the observant something else about that individual besides the person's probable ethnic background, is the observer making outright prejudiced assumptions. This is what racism has traditionally referred to—regardless of the prejudiced observer's own skin color. This is also why such intersectional, "sociological" claims, as that it is the white-skinned human being alone who defines oneself "in opposition to inferior others," represent pure racism, and nothing else besides.²⁴⁴

To further clarify the distinction between human rights and cultural rights, let me make an additional, final note: Even Rachel Dolezal enjoys the individual human right to identify herself as an African American, as she is allowed to do in any American census. She possesses that right without the African American community's consent. She may even form a separate group for other such persons regardless of what the NAACP officials might think of the matter. What she, in fact, did, was to lie about her ethnic background. That is not acceptable, not even in defending one's individual human rights.

Today, only two particular groups of people wish to reinvigorate the long-disproved 18th-century race theories and the sociological thinking based on them, namely Neo-Nazis and whiteness studies scholars. One may wonder what the latter group imagines it achieves with this strategy, if not renewed, even if reversed, racial segregation policies. What else could result from an intersectional policy of open hostility to white people who refuse DiAngelo-style therapy about their allegedly inborn shortcomings as human beings?

What we do know about the propagation of the whiteness paradigm in the United States is that it has not eased ethnic tensions in the country. Before the rise of intersectional critical race studies in 2013 as many as 70 percent of Americans viewed "racial" relations as comparatively unproblematic, whereas in 2022 only 42 percent believed so.²⁴⁵

Americans tend to underestimate their consciousness of ethnic issues. "What would it mean to 'come to terms' with racism?" Professor John McWhorter asks, and continues: "Precisely what configuration, event, or consensus would this coming to terms consist of?"²⁴⁶ His conclusion is this: "The general idea that America is in some kind of denial about race—or racism, which is what people really mean when they say this—is perfectly absurd."²⁴⁷ In fact, America is in denial of the terrific increase of marginalization among all ethnic groups and the white majority during the last four decades, a tendency only furthered by Clinton's social security reform of 1996.

The spark of the infamous 1992 Rodney King riots was the unfair trial in which the white police officers, who had beaten King close to death, were unjustly acquitted. People from all ethnic groups, however, took part in subsequent lootings and killings. Regarding the

multicultural background of the looters, an interviewee in a brilliant documentary about the riots by Daniel Lindsay and T.J. Martin stated the case this way: “You got some people at work 60 to 80 hours a week ... and still have bill collectors calling,” and the boss giving a pat on the back with the assurance that “it’s going to be all right.” The interviewee asked, “How long can that last?”²⁴⁸

Poverty and deprivation are themselves colorblind. So should their cures be. Social policy programs based on the beneficiaries’ color of skin are doomed to fail. One should instead study what the problem in each and every particular case is and find the solution for that particular aspect of marginalization.

Let us, nevertheless, take a brief look at one of the most heated debates about ethnic profiling, namely regarding American university admissions and recruiting practices.

UNIVERSITY DEBATES

One of the most heated current debates on affirmative action and recent intersectionality-based DEI (Diversity, Equality, and Inclusion) policies concerns university admission policies, recruiting, and general educational criteria.

If Harvard University had accepted students only according to SAT (standardized entrance tests for reading, writing, and mathematical skills) tests in the year 2013, the results would have been stunningly different from the actual results:

Asian Americans 43 percent
(actually admitted 18,7% / population share 6%)

white Americans 38,4 percent
(actually admitted 43,2% / population share 58%)

Latinos 2,4 percent
(actually admitted 9,5% / population share 19%).

African Americans 0,7 percent
(actually admitted 10,5% / population share 13%)²⁴⁹

Commentators think it evident that in the Harvard admission policies ethnic background determines the candidate’s likelihood of

admission at the level of 45 percent.²⁵⁰ That Asian Americans are, in fact, required to perform much better in the SAT tests than any other ethnic group led the Supreme Court to intervene in 2023. One of two African American Supreme Court justices voted for the 6–3 majority decision against current practices of racial profiling.²⁵¹ Moreover, African Americans who gain admittance to Harvard tend to have an academic family background.²⁵²

The Washington Post published an article supposedly explaining the fundamental rationale for Yale University’s similar practices of racial profiling by a so-called “stereotype promise” concept:

Social psychologists have shown that because racial stereotypes about academic ability are pervasive, even high-achieving African American students can underperform on verbal tests because of “stereotype threat.” “Stereotype promise” is the flip side of this: Because Asian American students are widely expected to do very well, they often over-perform.²⁵³

The amusingly absurd argument here, then, is that Asian American candidates spoil all the fun for others by over-performing in their tests. The analysis ends with a remark that “because they’re stereotypically perceived as smart and high-achieving, even average Asian American students are often enrolled in high school honors classes.”²⁵⁴

The crucial question remains the same: why do African American candidates underperform in the tests? In modern capitalist societies we all compete for educational opportunities, just as, later on, we compete for good jobs. While no serious sociologist would expect the United States to adopt the Nordic welfare state model as such, the most evident solution here would be to begin with moderate tax increases so as to put the public schools and all possible supportive services for their pupils in a condition at least comparable to private schools. The goal should be equal competitiveness of all in further studies and in the job market.

The American public does not support the current university admissions policies, which include not only ethnic profiling, but also openly nepotistic considerations (whether the applicant’s relatives

have studied in the same university), proofs of voluntary community service, and the like (all of them unknown in the Finnish system). In a recent survey, 79 percent of white interviewees would have entirely dismissed ethnic profiling, as would 69 percent of Latinos, 63 percent of Asian Americans, and 59 percent of African Americans.²⁵⁵

With their openly intersectional DEI programs American universities have also been gradually making their recruiting systems for teachers and research personnel more “inclusive.” This, as the argument goes, can be achieved by moving “away from abstract conceptions of ‘merit’ and ‘fit.’”²⁵⁶ What are the new, “less abstract” DEI recruiting qualifications like?

Instead of “degrees earned from elite institutions” and “experience working with well-known advisors or programs” one should be evaluated by the criteria of “training in racial equity and social justice work” and “experience with self-reflection and willingness to reflect on racialized outcomes of practice.”²⁵⁷

By the same token, such traditional criteria as the “number of publications in top-tier, peer-reviewed journals” should be replaced by “publications that examine issues of race and racial equity”—apparently no matter in what kind of publications. Traditionally defined teaching merits, in turn, should be replaced by “experience teaching and mentoring racially minoritized students.”²⁵⁸ And the list goes on. Most crucially, teaching staff opposed to any of this would today subject themselves to censorship and possible dismissal from their jobs.²⁵⁹

Even a brief look at the new DEI criteria above reveals that these new administrative programs aim to take control not only of teacher evaluation, but also of research topics, and would most probably control the research results as well. We are about to say farewell to anything traditionally considered academic freedom in the search for truth as well as to any epistemologically sound basis for that search. Influential Finnish academics and student organizations are already suggesting the adoption of DEI-criteria at the University of Helsinki.²⁶⁰ We wait, with somewhat mixed feelings, for “racial” profiling to appear in Finnish university admission practices.

In Finland intersectionality and wokeism still enjoy very thin popular support. A huge majority of the public (approximate 80 percent) do not, for example, accept the suggestion that a colored

person cannot be a racist.²⁶¹ The central outcome of two recent surveys of both Finnish academics and the Finnish public at large is that attitudes describable as “social justice fundamentalism,” “intersectionality,” or “wokeness” comprise a heavily “gendered phenomenon with little to no support from men and moderate support from women.”²⁶²

The overall results showed very moderate general support for any social justice fundamentalism, well below 50 percent. Only less than 15 percent of Finnish men could be viewed as sympathetic to intersectional views, whereas among women approximately 67 percent were moderately sympathetic to them. The highest intersectionality scores among academics were found (in this order) among social scientists, political scientists, and in the humanities, whereas the lowest scores were in medicine, business, and law.²⁶³

The essential contextual problem of whiteness studies scholars is that they study the world only in the context of their own theoretical paradigm. No matter how theoretically alert, real cultural studies always study real people in the real world. This is why every cultural studies expert must also understand one’s own culture—as a real culture with its always somehow specific power structures.

In the 2023 Finnish national matriculation tests there was a question based on my translation of the American Declaration of Independence (1776) as related to modern human rights thinking. The feedback about that question from some Finnish history teachers was that it was unfair to the 18-19-year-old students seeking their high school diplomas.

The reason, the teachers explained, was that Western intellectual history is dealt with only in the final, 4. course of the current senior high school history curriculum, and most students never take this additional, voluntary course in history. Could these students, unaware of even the meaning of the American (1776) and French (1789) revolutions, ever grasp the difference between the simple principle of human rights and the intersectional obsession about an abstract “white-normativity”?

Let us next take a systematic look at the conceptual toolkit intersectionality uses to make its abstract concept of whiteness appear relevant in social studies and the humanities.

3. Intersectional Conceptual Toolkit

GENDERS AND SEXUALITY

This chapter is dedicated to scrutinizing intersectionality's most central concepts of which the actual "intersectional positions" were partly handled in the first chapter. There is, however, much to learn about such concepts as sexuality, identity, subject-object relations, structure, discourse, and power—all of which intersectional scholarship uses more freely than has been the custom in traditional social sciences and the humanities.

The most crucial issue is how these terms are linked by intersectional scholars themselves with their only innovation in social sciences, the allegedly explanatorily omnipotent whiteness paradigm. At the end of the chapter, it is therefore necessary to return to the question of where that apparently coherent, Western white men's common cultural network might hide itself, given that its inherent racism is claimed to be mainly invisible. Are the so-called "white privileges" making life so hard for the entire rest of humankind something real or do they exist only in intersectional theory itself?

Intersectionality began as intersectional feminism. Following on feminist discussions about gender and sexual identities there emerged a more or less fully intersectional field of queer studies to move the study of sexuality beyond traditional, gender-centered approaches. Let us, therefore, first take a brief look at intersectional queer studies.

"Corporeality and bodily identities are not completely private and disconnected from ideological frameworks, but socially determined and relational entities," states Kaisa Ilmonen, who specializes in intersectional sexuality and gender research.²⁶⁴ Perhaps one could have added to the definition that because our bodies are

given to us without any consultation beforehand we ourselves remain responsible for constructing those bodily identities of ours.

The influential Finnish NGO, Seta association, focused on gender equality and sexuality issues, offered the following information about sexuality on its official website in 2023:

Sexuality is a multidimension phenomenon, which is not divisible into two opposite, distinct sexes, for the phenomenology of sexuality is more multidimensional. This multidimensionality includes sexual and gender minorities.²⁶⁵

After this introductory notion, the website information dealt exclusively with the “multidimensionality” of sexuality focusing on intersexuality and transsexuality and the multidimensionality of gender experiences.

Only at the end of the text does one find even a mention of biological sex, namely in the formulation according to which “people cannot be biologically divided into two exclusive sexes.”²⁶⁶ The information page, however, took notice of the fact that this apparently vague biological sex appears problematic only for approximate 5 percent of all people. Are we making sexuality a more complicated concept than it actually is?

One’s sex or sexual identity, of course, has nothing to do with how we should treat our fellow citizens in politics, in workplaces, in schools, in sport fields, in cultural functions, at home, and everywhere else. Everybody deserves to be treated according to their equal human rights on earth. Given this background it is somewhat confusing that even the number of sexes and genders has turned into a topic of such heated debate.

Distinguishing between male and female genital organs (or the biological sex) among newborn babies is problematic in only 1 out of 5,000 cases, the proportion of “indefinable” being an approximate 0,02 percent.²⁶⁷ The actual sexuality and sexual identity of a human being begins developing only during the teenage years. All in all, however, biologically intersexual adult human beings, including the so-called hermaphrodites, make up fewer than 2 percent of all humans, the lowest estimate being 0,02 percent.²⁶⁸

Biologically speaking, then, there are two or possibly three different sexes, depending on the definition of the term, meaning also that the intersexual minority is considerably small. No matter how small, representatives of any minority enjoy the same human rights as every other human being. Human rights are, by definition, individual rights.

Sexual identity, in turn, may differ considerably from one's biological sex, leading sometimes to wishes for a surgical change of sex. The estimates of people who feel deeply unsatisfied with their biological sex vary between 5 and 10 percent. Obviously among the young the percentage is higher, given that sexuality itself is still a new and sometimes confusing issue for them. Sexual identity, in sum, differs from biological sex because it consists of an individual's personal experience of one's own sexuality.

Gender experiences, whether related to sexual experiences or not, vary as well. This is why neither gender nor sexual identities should be strictly categorized. The fundamental reason for this is that, at least in Western countries, we respect the individual's sole and exclusive right of self-determination regarding practically all possible aspects of one's identity, whether sexual, gender, ethnic, national, professional, or any other. Perhaps it would be wise to acknowledge the third juridical sex "other" for mere practical reasons as has been done in many European countries.

As it comes to recent research on sexuality and gender one often finds it practically impossible to determine whether we are speaking of gender or sexual identity. One reason is that fashionable combinations of letters in the field, such as the American "LGBTQIA+" or the Finnish "HIBTIQ," tend to refer to both sexual orientation and gender identity.

New York City's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Community Center, for example, recently offered this explication for its own cluster of these terms: "LGBTQIA+ is an abbreviation for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, intersex, asexual, and more [+]. These terms are used to describe a person's sexual orientation or gender identity."²⁶⁹

On the website of Finnish Seta association one could in 2023 find a fairly comprehensive dictionary of the preferable terms divided into terms of gender identity and of sexual orientation.²⁷⁰ According

to numerous surveys about gay/lesbian and all other minority sexual orientations, they appear to vary hugely from 2 to 10 percent of all adults, also indicating that women are a bit more consistently heterosexual than men.

Regarding the term gender—socially determined roles of different sexes—it is important to keep in mind that numerous studies indicate that there are distinct differences between men's and women's average body size as well as average capacities regarding creativity (advantage women), mathematical problem solving (men), linguistic capacities (women), or spatial perception (men). Similarly, behavioral differences are noted between even primary-school-aged boys and girls, the reasons for the differences remaining a topic of debate among behavioral scientists.

Contemporary queer studies do not deal with mere forms or categories of sexuality but rather with new ways of perceiving and understanding gender and sexuality characterized by their general fluidity. It appears, indeed, a valuable goal to abandon any too standardized, normative definitions and determinations regarding these crucially important aspects of human life. According to the Helsinki University Term Bank for the Arts and Sciences, "queer" is an "umbrella concept" covering "bisexuals, transvestites, transgender people and others" who may "position themselves anywhere between the categories of men and women or elsewhere, entirely outside of these categories."²⁷¹

At least in its early stages queer studies were hence viewed as ranging from "critique of heteronormative sexuality, including attempts to overcome all general, normative [sexual and gender] distinctions, to critique of binaries themselves, and to deconstruction."²⁷² Along with deconstructing normative sexual and gender binaries, the central purpose of the queer studies can be viewed as that of normalizing all forms of sexuality.

The purpose is admirable. Why should anyone interfere with people's personal sexual desires and notions of their own sexuality? At least, modern, liberal individualism does not call for such interference. Even so, queer studies scholars appear particularly critical of the liberal Western worldview as opposed to non-Western cultural traits among world cultures.

The whiteness paradigm has invaded queer studies as well. Kaisa Ilmonen notes that it is somewhat customary to ask if the concept “queer” includes “an assumption of white skin color” and if “the white male subject” has been “inscribed into queer theory itself.” As she further points out, “Kobena Mercer and Isaac Julien noted as early as 1988 that ‘the predominant Western concept of sexuality in itself includes racism.’” Such a claim appears to be beyond any empirical proof or disproof. At least, one should first be able to define the particularly Western concept of sexuality as a coherent entity, not to speak of its hiding within itself such an entirely different social phenomenon as racism.

Ilmonen also notes that postcolonial scholars, who study neocolonial, global capitalism and offer a “critique of neoliberalism,” could further ask “what queer studies can tell us of migration, nationalities, prisons, welfare, sorrow, and human rights.”²⁷³ True, such issues as migration, nationality, prisons, people’s welfare, human sorrows, and human rights are important. But a fresh research perspective surely requires specifying whose sorrows, welfare, prisons, nationality, or migration status one is supposed to scrutinize and in what time and place.

Being critical of neoliberalism or being interested in sexual norms is not a research position in itself. A research position entails either a methodologically valid critique of earlier research or a fresh research question, the answer of which would be empirically verifiable.

The traditional methodological approach in which research concepts are distinctly defined so as to be analyzed in their relations to one another appears alien to intersectional feminist scholars. Ilmonen writes, for example that “because ‘queer’ ... was *inclined to separate gender from sexuality* it was viewed as overlooking large sections of feminist research.”²⁷⁴ In other words, some feminist researchers purposefully confused the concepts of gender and sex with each other. Such thinking has little to do with traditional conceptual analysis and empiricism.

Ilmonen further reports that after years of attempts to fit sexuality in all its variations into broadly inclusive queer theories, the field has gradually turned into a general “critique of diaspora, positioning, and local homosexual practices in which the concept of

queer itself has been queered further.” Making some, scientifically certifiable generalizations out of our utterly individual experiences of the world is the purpose of social studies, is it not? If it is, “queering” the very concept of queer itself hardly counts as that. Some queer theorists have noted that the “Foucauldian modelled queer theory,” even if “open to the analysis of complexity and difference within Western societies,” is “typically closed to acknowledging the difference between Western and non-Western cultures.”²⁷⁵

Be that as it may, Kaisa Ilmonen also brings up some criticism of intersectional theory. She opines, for example, that “intersectional theorization should more sharply” define its response to the question “Who is the intersectional subject?” That is a good question. She also brings up a uniquely interesting point about the curious binary frequently included in intersectionality-oriented text materials:

In the feminist critique it has been often noted that all identity positions are intersectional, although it appears that a certain shadow of a binary between the center and the margin is still present in most research deemed properly intersectional. It is this vague, coherent center that is usually not treated as intersectional itself. White, heterosexual, middle-class, Nordic masculinity is no doubt an identity position comprised of many intersecting positions, whereas it is rarely treated or analyzed as such.²⁷⁶

There is a good reason for Ilmonen’s pondering on this. Why, indeed, is this allegedly always “white, heterosexual” “center” not treated as intersectional like all other positions? Ilmonen’s formulation of the question still includes one odd premise. That is her characterization of white, masculine, and heterosexual position as “coherent.”

In what sense is such an identity position coherent to begin with—and compared to what? At least white Finnish men do not share common opinions on practically anything. Take any public or bar discussion on sex, gender, social politics, national health, migration, university politics, household chores, proper amount of make up for women or for men themselves, changing diapers, the

prices of car repair or of food, and see if they do not involve disagreements.

Whence has arisen the odd idea that Western culture and its conceptions of proper identity should be described as coherent or consistent? If there is any consistency to be found, it is that disagreeing and debating is the very centerpiece of Western individualism and, hence, of any particularly Western way of thinking and behaving.

As for so-called normal sexuality, it is worth keeping in mind that very little was publicly known about the common sexual patterns of even the white middle class until Alfred Kinsey's world-famous sexuality surveys at the turn of the 1950s. It was only then revealed that probably as many as 10 percent of American males were homosexuals or at least homosexually oriented. Likewise, women's sexual desires became a public issue, although earlier treated mainly as taboo.²⁷⁷

What does Western individualism as a value dictate about our different gender and sexual identities? It dictates interpersonal respect for everyone. The notion of every individual being the master and sole authority of one's identity in terms of gender, sex, profession, family relations, drinking habits, and the like is at the very heart of the Western image of humanity itself. Social scientists may classify us as belonging to this or that social category, but not as representatives of any way of thinking without asking us what we actually think. And as scientists it should be evident to them that speaking of a minority and of "minoritizing" someone are two entirely different things.

Given that Kaisa Ilmonen's article on queer studies also includes a descriptive analysis of the entire intersectional conceptual toolkit for the humanities and social sciences, we may now shift to mapping that conceptual geography bit by bit, while considering how those concepts are related to one another.

IDENTITY, DISCOURSE, NORMATIVITY, AND STRUCTURE

The concept of intersection itself, as we have seen earlier, refers to examining a person's life conditions via the categories of gender, sex, age, family status, nationality, wealth, and the like, but as always overlapping and hence as uniquely meaningful precisely in the way

they intersect with each other. We have also seen why there is hardly anything new in all this.

The other intersectional key concepts, which will now be put under the looking glass, are identity, subject-object relation, constructions, power, and discourse. As Kaisa Ilmonen informs us, intersectionality focuses on

scrutinizing the relation of art, culture, interpersonal relations, juridical and sociopolitical meaning production to ideologically, nationally, ethnically, socially, and gender and sex -based structured forms of knowledge production. These forms of knowledge production transport and transfer power relations from one subject to another.

According to this quotation, intersectionality studies meaning production processes providing knowledge, which in turn, modify and shift the given social power relations. In this process, Ilmonen continues, “the subject modifies one’s relation to reality, and obtains different modes of agency, positions of resistance, and intersecting identity positions.”

Let us first examine the intersectional concept of identity. “The central purpose of intersectionality,” Ilmonen declares, “has been to bring forth the marginalized voices of various identity policy movements.” Methodologically speaking, the intersectional approach “examines the relations of identities; that is, the ways in which people have feelings of both ‘belonging and of differing from one another’” but still keep “individuality from falling into essentializing speech,” as Ilmonen explains the case, drawing partly on Professor Leena-Maija Rossi.

Considering the above formulations, one is inclined to ask, in what sense an identity could ever be studied, if not in its relations to other identities. What would an identity consist in, if not in dealing with one’s personal experiences of differing from other individuals (while of course finding similarities as well)? What, in turn, would make speaking of identity a matter of “essences”? When assessing oneself in relation to others, we are not obligated in any sense to “essentialize” ourselves or other people. In fact, any individual

identity is by definition relational regarding every other person on earth. During one's lifetime it is also apt to change.

Ilmonen's key statement about identity studies and intersectional scholars' oddly impersonalized concept of subject is this:

As Jonathan Culler once put it, in poststructuralist discourse the subject was examined not as the originator and producer of meanings, but as dispersed into the structures building it up. The subject was to be more and more consistently considered as a construction in itself—a product of different conventions and discourses. The subject's individuality and identity were understood to be expressed through historically changing cultural discourses. Hence, the subject did not come to refer to a given selfhood, but instead something formed in relation to others.

Here the identity dialogue does not concern my attitude to other people being different from me. Instead, it concerns both me and the others as "subjects" so as to reduce our conceptions of identity into mere products of "conventions and discourses." This is how intersectionality can entirely ignore the traditional notion of identity formation as essentially arising from one's perception and recognition of the other (as different from oneself).

Judith Butler, as Ilmonen retails, has "characterized identity as a 'necessary mistake' and suggested that subjectivity forms itself in the repetition of power-related norms." Or, as noted by Dino Felluga, "Butler contends that our sense of independent, self-willed subjectivity is really a retroactive construction that comes about only through the enactment of social conventions."²⁷⁸

Insofar as my identity is essentially a mere mistake, comprised of my fundamentally unconscious acts of repeating and accommodating myself to the hegemonic and heteronormatively conventional (Finnish) discourses into which I was born, I would (as a scholar myself) feel treated quite condescendingly by Butler. Regardless of how well she has internalized Lacanian psychology and different versions of John L. Austin's classic performativity theory

(the basics of which are not too complicated), Butler's approach is dangerously close to arguing that we are all personally incapable of genuinely critical thinking, given our apparently inborn inclination to merely enact hegemonic, "social conventions."

As for the hegemonic aspects of social norms, all norms are hegemonic in the sense that they convey some kind of obligation. I am personally committed to the values of free speech and equality. They are normative values, and to mean anything they include an obligation to follow them as rules for my behavior with other people.

Deep down, the intersectional theory seems to treat people as more or less ignorant products of "conventions and discourses," at least as long as they are not yet properly schooled in the entire theoretical framework of intersectionality itself. We will later encounter examples of intersectional surveys in which the central research result is only frustration by the interviewees' failure to grasp their sinful whiteness, that odd centerpiece of the intersectional social studies paradigm.²⁷⁹

The typically intersectional semiotic play with the subject-object relation serves only to turn rather simple research questions into something utterly complicated and mysterious to the general public. In traditional research vocabulary, the subject (the researcher) studies the object (the target of the research), so that the former provides new knowledge of the latter, not the other way around.

A historian studies the past and creates knowledge out of it, which is called history. Methodologically this restricts the relevance of history studies rather crucially: The historian does not offer knowledge claims of current society, but of the past. What is not past cannot be history either. One should not confuse this with the fact that all we learn, we learn from the past and as always somehow interpreted with the complex cultural, linguistic, conceptual, perceptual (perhaps even performative) personal intellectual toolkit we have acquired.

Nevertheless, with only few exceptions, such as those seen in quantum physics and in some particular methods of distinguishing what people say from what they mean in sociological surveys, studying an object does not alter the object itself. By contrast, according to the classic model of the hermeneutic circle, the research topic by definition changes the researcher's predispositions about the

topic, thus turning every genuine research into a learning process for the researcher.

The most exotic academic tenets of intersectionality relate to epistemological questions—the argumentative basis for producing knowledge claims in general. The central intersectional claim about this topic is that our current higher education and knowledge production is entirely based on a seriously restricted, “white, male, and Eurocentric epistemological perspective.”²⁸⁰ What would the new, intersectional epistemology be like?

As Ilmonen puts it, intersectional research “does not focus on the meaning of a single cultural hegemony, such as whiteness or patriarchy, but on the simultaneous functioning of multiple hegemonic systems of knowledge.” To clarify the fundamental basis of this assertion she refers to Professor Jennifer Nash’s claim that intersectionality employs “the ostensibly *unique epistemological* position of marginalized subjects to fashion a vision of equality.”²⁸¹ What kind of methodological thinking could ever be based on the notion of some persons possessing “unique epistemological” positions?

In fact, a rich Finn’s epistemological position—a position regarding what constitutes valid knowledge—cannot differ from the epistemological position of a poor American or that of a Chinese with medium income. All of them may know, may not know, or may erroneously think they know. The very idea of the relativity of knowledge itself, even if the purpose is to fashion some “vision of equality,” is preposterous. Dealing with essentially incomplete knowledge is an entirely different thing.

To assert that a person’s social status or family history could render knowledge as epistemologically relative is to trivialize knowing into something absolutely objective. No serious scholar in either arts or sciences has embraced such a naïve, “perfectly objective” conception of knowledge for the last half century. Natural sciences’ understanding of an objective research result is traditionally far less concerned with subjectivity than it is in the humanities, although few definite “truths” have yet been established even in quantum mechanics. The very idea of progressive science entails that everything is not yet known.

Whenever interpretation is part of the research result, as it often is in social studies, it is still to be based on given empirical material. To what extent an interpretation represents even a partial truth about our experience of the world is subject to review by the academic community. But should a “marginalized” subject have a “unique” epistemological position regarding the very act of knowing, how could knowledge be communicable to begin with? How could the academic community promote the use of research knowledge among decision makers or anywhere else after thus trivializing the very notion of knowing itself?

Apparently, most intersectional scholars do not sign on to the so-called standpoint theory, which embraces the classic *argumentum ad hominem* fallacy in which an argument is better or worse depending on who offers it. This is how a Finnish intersectional researcher, Eveliina Heino describes her own attitude to the standpoint theory:

The standpoint theory provides one of the most serious problems for intersectional thought in general. ... It would be very problematic from a scholarly viewpoint to think that only migrants or racialized people could produce valid research on these particular groups of people. ... An additional problem is caused by the fact that it is next to impossible to determine who would have the so-called “correct position.” I am myself an immigrant [to Finland], but I could not imagine speaking for all immigrants, even for those arriving from my previous homeland.²⁸²

The epistemologically absurd standpoint theory would, hence, allow excluding researchers not belonging to the ethnic group under study from doing research on them to begin with. In its insistence on giving a certain group a voice in knowledge production even at the cost of denying it to outsiders, the entire theory is founded on the idea of rejecting any traditional academic standards of objectivity and empiricism.

Even moderate intersectional scholars enjoy the habit of emphasizing the “inherent *multiplicity* and *fluidity*” of “whiteness” as

well as of other “categories of hegemony and privilege.”²⁸³ One example of this trend is Kaisa Ilmonen’s remark, that in queer studies the concept of queer itself has been “queered further.”²⁸⁴

Such a move appears to convey good-natured unwillingness to determine minority identities in any language even potentially related to any Foucauldian discourse of power (we will return to Foucault). As a consequence, however, queer studies scholars have ended up competing over how little to claim about their research subject. The less you say, the more sensitively and more “correctly” you treat your research subject. What the informative value of such an approach would be remains somewhat questionable.

Let us consider the consequences of this notion of ultimate fluidity of meanings regarding successful communication. In addition to Gayatri Spivak’s famous ponderings on how utterly impossible it is even to conceptualize minority identities in majority languages the pervasive semiotic-Derridean-linguistic “astonishment” among the scholarly community about the fact that meanings are fluid and always context-related does not alter a much more significant fact. This is that the unnecessarily mystified human communication, for the service of which languages were born to begin with, is a fundamental precondition of all social life.

It is, indeed, somewhat surprising that in current academic texts one rarely encounters the simple notion that most of the time people communicate with each other quite successfully. Were the human being not a master of communication among all the species on earth, we would hardly have highways, skyscrapers, other buildings (in all imaginable sizes and shapes), cars, trains, computers, airplanes, submarines, satellites, and space rockets. We also enjoy stunningly rich fiction and non-fiction literature, paintings, plastic arts, theaters, movies, video games, and classical and folk music cultures. We have agriculture, high culture, political culture, popular culture, counterculture, and tens of thousands of ethnic cultures, local cultural traditions, and subcultures.

We also have laws and regulations, power structures of various kinds, art institutions, a formally regulated academic community, somewhat regulated mass media, and mostly unregulated social media. People successfully communicate with one another on a daily basis throughout 50-year long marriages, often also raising

very communicative children. For people with serious problems in communicating or in understanding even themselves we have therapy services in which such concerns are *communicated*.

In sum, we have been amazingly successful in communicating the meanings of our ideas. Once one sets out to do no more than deconstruct the meaning of meanings in a Derridean or other fashion, one also ceases to study any transfer of meaning. For anything to be considered in terms of truth or reference one must consider it in terms of interpersonal relations and thus also as communicable on some level.

True, in our everyday life, we tend to communicate in an unending series of partial success and sometimes confusing failure, but nevertheless usually successfully in the long run. How seriously flawed in communication skills would a human being be who does not grasp the fundamental political difference between the American Republicans and Democrats or between the Finnish Social Democrats and the right-wing National Coalition party? Words have meaning and they carry meanings beyond merely enabling human communication. This is where one should begin when doing social studies or studying discrimination.

Category is one of the most problematic concepts in the intersectional field of study. Ilmonen summarizes the topic by noting that intersectionality

is a research perspective that takes into account the simultaneous functioning of the multiple categories sustaining dominant power relations. These categories are, for example, ethnicity, gender, class, sexuality, geographic position, caste, age, or any other position that is meaningful for the construction of an individual or collective identity. Categories are viewed as socially or culturally constructed, and they affect in multiple ways various interpersonal relations. These effects become most clearly visible in unequal constructions (*rakenteet*).

The above-mentioned “categories sustaining dominant power relations” appear to be determinable by whatever the

intersectional scholar happens to determine as such and always by the criterion of someone being oppressed. This is the reason why intersectional scholars often confuse inequalities with simple differences between people (as we will see).²⁸⁵

The only central concept that Ilmonen does not handle in her summary of intersectional theoretical assumptions is “structure,” although she speaks of Roderick A. Ferguson’s studies as critique of structures or of structuralism, probably hinting at more or less poststructuralist epistemological positions among intersectional scholars.

As to how intersectional scholars tend to understand social constructions as related to the concepts of whiteness and white supremacy, this is how Teresa Guess formulates the case:

... the social construction of *whiteness* cannot be complete unless we acknowledge the social and political significance of “race” in America. Whatever its scientific validity, “race” is a social fact in which the social and political significance of *whiteness* plays a critical role.²⁸⁶

We have here “social constructions,” such as “whiteness” and “social facts,” such as “race.” As noted earlier, given that the scientific validity of “race” is questioned by Guess herself, while still remaining “a social fact” and a “construction,” one may well ask whether spiritualists’ auric energy or Santa Claus also qualify as social facts and constructions? Are we speaking of real social life or are we only speaking of people’s varying perceptions and convictions about reality?

In order to clarify the fundamental conceptual mayhem involved in intersectional ideas about constructions, structures and structuralism, let us cite Ron Mallon’s (not confessedly intersectional) introduction to social constructivism:

If there is any core idea of social constructionism, it is that some object or objects are caused or controlled by social or cultural factors rather than natural factors, and if there is any core motivation of such research, it is the

aim of showing that such objects are or were under our control: they could be, or might have been, otherwise.²⁸⁷

Mallon offers us here, even if in a somewhat complicated way, a valid formulation of the simple fact that social sciences tend to study things that are of social origins. Social scientists, therefore, mainly study things that are produced by people living their lives in some human society—even if those things, be they concepts or conceptualizations or theories, may also have some natural basis, beginning with the fact that the human being is a social animal. Even the hermit becomes socially definable only via her isolation.

The most important point made by Mallon above is that the actual object under research, the social construction, is modifiable. It can be changed by people themselves. Poststructuralism is an approach that, from its very beginnings, concentrated on examining the modifiability of social structures as well as the researcher's own position in interpreting such structures.

Social constructivism has sometimes produced confusing conclusions. Mallon notes that such provocative claims as that “there were no homosexuals before the concept *homosexual* came to be expressed in Western culture in the nineteenth century (e.g. Foucault 1978, Halperin 1990) or that race is a modern invention (e.g. Taylor 2004) seem to make sense if we see sexual or racial kinds as in part constituted by our concepts of them.” The reference to the concept of homosexuality is from Michel Foucault's classic *Les mots et les choses* (1966).²⁸⁸

Such provocative statements appear problematic, because they are often misunderstood. Foucault did not imagine that homosexual behavior was unknown before the 19th century. He was referring to the historical fact that the phenomenon became to be named and socially controlled during that era, often by being prohibited.

By the same token, the association of so-called racial differences with people's different pigments of skin has never been contested (at least before intersectionality), although the concept of race was invented only in the 17th century by European natural scientists. They defined the so-called races not only by peoples' different skin colors, but also by their geographical origins and

culture. Since these scientists (most of them sheer amateurs by any modern scientific standards) were all Europeans, non-European ethnicities easily appeared to them somehow alien and less civilized than those of Europe.

As Mallon writes, constructivist projects tend still to be normative: “Thinkers interested in gender, race, mental illness and disability, are often motivated not only by concern with the metaphysics of these categories, but with questions of social morality and justice that connect with them.” Research often appears to treat “essentially incorporate normative concepts” so as to hold authorities morally responsible for keeping them up.²⁸⁹ Normativity and moralistic attitudes seem to go hand in hand, and conspicuously so within the comparatively new intersectional research field.

The most influential representative of what is called structuralist constructivism, cultural anthropologist Pierre Bourdieu, insists that in our social world (or at least in sociology) we are constantly dealing with objective social structures and with people’s subjective representations of them. Our behavior and thinking about society are hence not purely voluntary, but remain, to an important degree, restrained by these “objective” structures.

Because these structures or our general patterns of conceptualizing the social world are often taken as given, they are also apt to remain unnoticed and deceptively self-evident. Moreover, Bourdieu’s constructivism has to do not only with our interpreting social structures, but also with the historical changes of those “objective” structures.²⁹⁰

Bluntly put, constructions can be viewed as the social conceptualization of social structures. Bourdieu’s notion of social structures as “objective” does not therefore mean that they should be viewed as ontologically independent of human sociality. They are “objective” only in relation to our understanding and action as social beings, because deep down all social structures concern only those two things.

All norms, institutions, and general opinions are apt to change in history. Similarly modifiable are Bourdieu’s concept of “habitus” (a kind of one’s continuing positioning in our social world) just as are his “fields” of power-play and negotiation, such as art, religion, education, and most importantly, politics.

As to whiteness paradigm, one should ask to what extent any such structure as, say, white supremacy could appear “objective.” As noted, even “objective” structures are not independent of our thinking about society and its historical changes. This is why historical reading of the Euro-American imperialist era and later changes is of critical importance in evaluating the intersectional conceptualizations of whiteness or white supremacy.

The classic intellectual authority most often cited by intersectional scholars, Michel Foucault, insists that the key to all sociological thought is the concept of power. He formulates the case thus:

We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it “excludes”, it “represses”, it “censors”, it “abstracts”, it “masks”, it “conceals”. In fact, power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production.²⁹¹

In sum, for Foucault, power alone produces reality itself and hence also the entire domain of objects we perceive and consider in terms of truth. If one asks, can a so-called “objective” social structure, such as whiteness, be invented, the answer is obvious. If reality can be viewed as produced, all possible objects of knowledge are also produced. Conceptions can hence be invented. Did whiteness qualify as a concept, a construction, or a structure prior to the whiteness studies scholars establishing it as such?

How, in turn, should we understand the concept of discourse, which has gained a singularly remarkable role in social studies and the humanities during the last half century? Discourse has a set of specific linguistic meanings, but in social sciences it is generally understood as more or less derivable from Foucault’s use of the term.

In probing the meaning of discourse, one should first note that there is practically an infinite number of discourses. In asserting the relationship of discourses to power and to knowledge production, it is notable that Foucault is usually dealing with various

expertise practices that also more or less “systematically create the objects they talk about.”²⁹² Unsurprisingly, in their study of discourses intersectional scholars are interested in exploring to “what extent has sociology participated in knowledge creation that results in,” for example, the “normalization of America’s racial hierarchies.”²⁹³

What is, in fact, meant by the concept of knowledge creation? Indeed, in the modern world of expertise, physicists tell us what physical reality is like, historians produce historical knowledge, engineers provide technological understanding, and sociologists produce knowledge of our social world. Doctors in medical sciences (of whom Foucault spoke a lot) have, throughout human history, diagnosed diseases and defined all kinds of abnormalities of both physical and mental health for us all—to the extent that homosexuality, for example, lost its former status as some sort of mental disturbance only in the early 1980s.

All modern experts definitely use power over the rest of us regarding how to recognize truthful knowledge and how to distinguish it from anything merely esoteric.

All forms of modern expertise discourses are creative as well, including medical sciences. Autism, for example, gained its modern meaning as an impairment of social interaction (with a huge variety of degrees and kinds) only in the late 1970s. Earlier the term was associated only with severe schizophrenia. ADHD has been a real success story among modern diagnoses since its invention in 1987, even if paling in comparison to the more recent “white fragility.”

Today, therapies are available for all those not-yet-proselytes regarding their “white privileges.” But how severe a mental problem are we actually dealing with here? Before the rise of the whiteness paradigm during the last two decades, I had no idea of such a concept as even potentially important for my worldview or identity. Given that experts may, as the Foucauldian definition indicates, even create the object under investigation, it is worth asking to what extent the whiteness paradigm is only an invention of whiteness studies.

So, does such a thing as whiteness exist anywhere beyond the intersectional theoretical imagination? The question has two fundamental elements to it, namely the ontological and

epistemological. Let us therefore briefly discuss traditional scientific thought regarding ontology and epistemology.

Professor Hannu Simola from the University of Helsinki—who has studied Finnish educational discourses for decades—identifies himself as “an ontological realist (reality exists regardless of human consciousness of it)” and “an epistemic relativist (knowledge we acquire of reality is always imperfect).”²⁹⁴ Another way to formulate this fundamental philosophical binary is to speak of the traditional, scientific belief in ontological reality (reality as independent of us as its observers) and of the opposite position of ontological idealism (reality is fundamentally dependent on our own mental powers of conceiving the world around us).²⁹⁵

It is hardly useful to reduce reality to nothing but a product of our mental powers in the fashion of extreme idealism. Ideas themselves tend to change. Even a realist can believe our knowledge of reality being in essence imperfect. We are always dealing with imperfect knowledge, given our fundamental belief in scientific progress—and our consequent acceptance of phenomena such as the previously unknown (ideas of) bacteria, x-rays, radio signals, nuclear power, the Higgs boson, Covid vaccinations, and the like.

The history of accumulating scientific knowledge, in fact, speaks only to its becoming more and more accurate, and simultaneously becoming more exclusively comprehensible only to experts producing it. It nevertheless remains imperfect even according to theoretical physicists (and one cannot get much more theoretical than that). Philosophers interested in popularizations of quantum mechanics tend today allow that reality itself is in constant change and in this sense essentially imperfect.²⁹⁶

One way to map one’s philosophical position regarding idealism and realism is to consider it within the four-fold field proposed by Allan Megill. He divides our possibilities of interpretations of the world into two possible ontological and two possible methodological positions. One’s basic attitude represents, first, either ontological holism or ontological individualism, and second, either methodological holism or methodological individualism. Let us consider why the individualistic option is safer for an academic researcher to hold in both cases.

As Megill explains the ontology options, “an ontological holist is someone who holds that wholes are greater than the sum of the parts and relations of which they are made up” thus believing that “there is some sort of *je ne sais quoi* that the whole has *in addition* to the parts and relations making it up.”²⁹⁷ An ontological individualist, by contrast, presumes that there are things and their relations, but nothing else besides—not, for example God, to connect them all.

An ontological individualist, in other words, does not assume any implicit or somehow hidden relationships among things, although new, previously unnoticed relations might be empirically revealed. Megill finds traits of ontological individualism even in the historical thought of Karl Marx, who (at least occasionally) appeared to hold “that human history is simply what human beings, all added up together, do.”²⁹⁸

Why would methodological individualism be generally preferable to methodological holism? The methodological holist holds, to put it bluntly, that the consequences of a thing can be used to make inferences about the thing itself by using the functional explanation. Hence, the holistic set of (in fact, untenable) assumptions in social sciences appears to be “that all elements in social life are interconnected; that these elements support or reinforce one another; and that each element is as it is because of its contribution to the whole.”²⁹⁹ Another characteristic trait of a holistic approach is its interdisciplinary willingness to allow all methodological tools and techniques to be used in all research endeavors.

All in all, however, the holistic approach, with its fundamental premise that everything affects everything else, is of little help in analytic problem solving. At my cultural studies methodology seminars, we never discuss the fact that without Newtonian gravity students could not even sit on their chairs. That this “physical relation of things” basically affects similarly everything on earth, means that it does not help explain anything in the specific field of cultural studies. One needs a different kind of thinking in cultural studies than in physics, no matter how interdisciplinary or cross-boundary one wishes to be.

There is simply no escape from the notion that every valid explanation is dependent on its methodological conditions. On the other hand, an explanation without an epistemologically valid basis

does not qualify as academic to begin with. This is why the borders between the different fields of science cannot be ignored in any attempt at valid explanation for anything. This is also why ontological individualism and methodological individualism are by far the safest options for doing academic research.

One often encounters such apparently innovative examples of interdisciplinary methodology as that of Roderick A. Ferguson in putting James Baldwin's fictional *Go Tell It on the Mountain* (1953) into dialogue with Gunnar Myrdal's classic in sociology, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (1944).³⁰⁰ What is to be thought of such an interdisciplinary endeavor?

First, one might note that if such a dialogue were to reveal something new about the traumatic oppression of black people, it could tell of it only in the American context and only before the 1960s Civil Rights Movement and the consequent revolutionary changes in American social thought.

Second, and more importantly, whatever Ferguson could draw from these books from the past (the second one fictional), the examination belongs, methodologically speaking, to literary studies. No doubt, literary studies may enrich a social scientist's thinking. But Ferguson's study cannot offer valid results in social sciences for the simple reason that literary interpretation of books, no matter how comparative in nature, does not answer any valid research question in the field of social studies.

On the practical level the problem with the fashionable interdisciplinary research approach is the following: a research question for which one could find answers in literature, poems, paintings, engineering, and intellectual history tends to provide only a portrait of the subject rather than explaining anything about it. One such portrait is provided by an early classic of interdisciplinary studies, Alan Trachtenberg's *Brooklyn Bridge: Fact and Symbol* (1965).³⁰¹ How does he manage to combine his different fields of study?

Trachtenberg maintains, for example, that the Brooklyn bridge symbolizes a specific Hamiltonian belief in industrial capitalism (which Alexander Hamilton himself did not live to witness because he died in a duel in 1805). As an opposing force to this fundamental American intellectual trend the author brings up the equally

important utopian thought ascribed to Thomas Jefferson (which Jefferson never himself embraced).³⁰² Trachtenberg then retails in detail the history of constructing the famous bridge in 1869–1883, also bringing into the picture the rich history of engineering.

Trachtenberg turns finally into an artistic study of numerous poems and paintings of the bridge, although his interpretations regarding what the bridge in each poem and painting symbolizes is not inevitably dependent on what particular bridge the artists refer to in each case. As a result, we gain an empirically odd portrait of one bridge in New York, which eventually appears to symbolize the entire American way of life—whatever that is supposed to mean to each of us. What explains everything usually fails to explain anything in particular.

What should we think of the epistemological presumptions of two Finnish scholars, Janne Lahti and Rinna Kullaa, who begin their general introduction to the field of colonial studies with a reference to Gayatri Spivak's essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" The point they draw from Spivak's article is that even today the majority of academics in colonial studies tend to rely solely on the heritage of Western academic thought and intellectual history.³⁰³ From what other intellectual perspective should one look at the colonial era?

The very basics of epistemology require the researcher's understanding of oneself as a cultural being. The point about the famous hermeneutic circle is that the researcher always first acknowledges approaching one's topic from some particular (to some extent "prejudiced") point of view so as to begin to learn something new about the topic itself. Only after the learning process may the scholar communicate the new, somehow fresh aspect of the topic to one's colleagues and to the public at large.³⁰⁴

In other words, there is no way for a Finnish historian, even if an expert in Chinese culture, to avoid looking at that culture from a certain Finnish perspective. This, of course, does not prevent a Western scholar from becoming an expert in Chinese culture or a Chinese scholar from gaining genuine expertise in Lockean studies. Even so, we are speaking of only academic expertise, and claiming that one could (or should) overcome one's life experience as a Chinese or a Finnish academic would require an entirely new understanding of academic expertise itself. This is why

methodological issues matter, even if they appear oddly difficult for so many academic crusaders to grasp or even to care about.

Sociologist Mike Savage, who writes, if not outright intersectional sociology, at least intersectionality-oriented “sociology of inequality,” embraces similarly odd epistemological views. He is proud that his students and other young sociologists have “a clear moral tone and draw on wide-ranging theoretical, historical, and interpretative reference points,” hence being “simultaneously quantitative, qualitative, historical, comparative, theoretical, political, and moral.” In sum, they are allegedly capable of “a profound reordering of social scientific expertise.”³⁰⁵

In fact, no scientific thought permits an analysis that could ever be all that “simultaneously”—beginning with the very simplest distinction between the moral question of how things should be and the empirical question of how they, in fact, are. To revise Upton Sinclair’s old statement, “It is difficult to get a person to understand something when one’s salary or moral fervor depends upon not understanding it.”

Let us briefly return to the notion that explaining everything tends to end up in a failure to explain anything in particular. Even “structural intersectionality” as introduced by Kimberle Crenshaw in 1991 fails to provide a fresh perspective on sociopolitical structures by referring simply to a set of overlapping individual problems of an abused, poor, uneducated black single mother with an immigrant status.³⁰⁶

Claiming that all such problems of an individual black single mother must result from the centuries-old social structures of patriarchy and racism does not amount to analytic thinking. An analysis of such a situation would require looking for the specific reasons for her abuse, for her lack of education, for her perhaps unintended single motherhood, and for her immigrant status. Only then could one begin to consider the particular social structures supposedly contributing to her unfortunate situation.

What should be clear by now is that our (no matter how intersectional) identity positions do not inevitably concern social submission, oppression, or deprivation. Identity positions are by their very nature (as we earlier saw intersectional scholars themselves describing them) something all human beings share in various modes

and forms during their lives. This is why an attempt to approach social justice as a matter of mere intersections of human life is no more innovative than viewing human life itself in terms of such intersectional positions.

What is epistemologically necessary in anything worth calling an analysis is this: One needs to compare the thing to some other thing in order to even begin analyzing it. And the very first step in analyzing a social structure should be determining what makes it social as compared to political, economic, psychological, physical, literary, or some other structure. Only after that may one determine what kind of relations that particular structure might have with other social structures, if any.

Regarding structural analysis, the intersectional theory is simply void of any innovativeness as to developing better methods or tools for doing social research on our daily exercise of various power relations with our family members, friends, colleagues, bar acquaintances, political allies, personal enemies, and the rest of humankind. Such daily exercise of power relations naturally relates to our national identities, family identities, professional identities, and sexual identities alongside our tribal or communal loyalties and commitments. It also has to do with our personal capabilities and incapacities, with our sympathies and empathies, and even with our emotional stability in daily facing our imperfect and occasionally horrendous world.

Social justice, of course, is the concept at the bottom of all intersectional talk of inadequate equality and equity and of unfair distribution of wealth and power. But intersectional scholars leave the ideal of equality frequently undetermined beyond vague references to it as if an absolute in our absolutely imperfect world. Is equality perhaps considered impossible to be achieved in the capitalist, liberal majoritarian democracy with constitutionally secured individual human rights? If so, intersectional scholars do not suggest an alternative social order by which to replace the current one so as to attain the kind of social justice they claim to advocate (whatever its precise nature).

As to people's deepest needs and desires, James Baldwin once wrote that "people are not, for example, terribly anxious to be equal (equal after all, to what and to whom?) but they love the idea

of being superior.”³⁰⁷ Indeed, the classic liberal principle of equal opportunities was invented for everyone to compete equally with everyone else in the pursuit of happiness. Truly enough, we compete even for most desirable spouses.

The liberal principle, however, leaves the definition of self-fulfillment open. It thus particularly points to the idea of self-development to be achieved only according to one’s own, individual talents and inclinations—be they in English literature, playing the violin, plumbing, painting, leading a corporation, sewing a quilt, or in any other of the thousands of human arts and practices.

Whether employing constructivist structuralism or poststructuralist constructivism one should also consider for what particular purpose each sociological, political, economic, psychological, or literary concept is used by whom, when, and where. To give an example, consider different understandings of such an apparently simple economic concept as the public debt.

Professor Mika Pantzar of the University of Helsinki makes interesting observations about the common Finnish understanding of our allegedly catastrophically huge public debt. The Standard Eurobarometer survey revealed that Finns with their public debt at 82 percent/GDP were as concerned about it as the Italians about their 172 percent/GDP debt. The Germans and the Dutch, both with public debts on the same level with the Finns, rarely mentioned the national debt as a particular concern. Neither did the Spanish with their 143 percent/GDP debt.³⁰⁸

The U.S. public debt is approximately 150 percent/GDP and even in Canada the figure is 134 percent/GDP.³⁰⁹ Such differences speak to the importance of the precise context in which any particular “structural” problem is assessed and by whom.

Let us next take a look at how intersectional scholars, in fact, gather empirical evidence to prove their a priori established whiteness problem of which they frequently find the larger public to be ignorant.

GATHERING EVIDENCE OF WHITE FRAGILITY

In their article “Doing Whiteness and Masculinities at School: Finnish 12- to 15-Year-Olds’ Narratives on Multiethnicity” (published by the Helsinki University Press in 2022) intersectional scholars Marja

Peltola and Ann Phoenix look for traces of white fragility by interviewing children at two Finnish schools. The article consists of the scholars' explanation of the world exclusively in terms of the intersectional theoretical framework (5 pages), followed by an empiricist section (10 pages), in which they prove, on the basis of interviews that Finnish school children have been left ignorant of that theoretical framework.

In others words, the two scholars already “know” that the thing called whiteness has been implanted in the minds of their white interviewees, although as mere children the interviewees appear incapable of grasping the fact. Hence, the interviewees' statements serve only to reveal their white fragility—even if in terms of their unawareness rather than direct denial of their white privileges. How exactly do Peltola and Phoenix reach their expected results?

The scholars' first observation about the interviews is that because the actual interviewer was a white Finnish woman, the interviewees did not question her ethnicity or personal understanding of the Finnish primary school system. From this observation Peltola and Phoenix think it safe to conclude that “whiteness and Finnishness were self-evidently shared features with the white Finnish interviewees.”³¹⁰ Should the 12-15-year-old school children be particularly suspect of the fact that the interviewer is a white woman (as are 90 percent of Finnish women) or perhaps begin the interview by lamenting about their own skin color?

Or, consider the logic behind the conclusion made by Peltola and Phoenix that “whiteness was seldom discussed by the interviewees, which highlights its normative position.”³¹¹ Should we similarly conclude that since queer culture, fascism, socialism, or intersectionality did not come up as special topics by the school children they also must enjoy a normative position in their thinking?

The interviewed children also failed to challenge “the pervasive myth that Finland is monoethnic,” even if the most obvious reason was, as the researchers themselves note, that “there were very few children from minoritized ethnic groups” in the school in question.³¹² How incompetent can school children be as sociologists? Out of 32 interviewed children from two separate schools the

researchers end up being content with only two conveying sufficiently intersectional attitudes.³¹³

When the interviewer turned to the issue of multiculturalism, children reportedly asked if the question perhaps concerned religious differences. A white-skinned young interviewee, Sofia, reported that she knew of “three or four people who wear ‘that kind of veil’” in their school.³¹⁴

The researchers’ interpretative inference from this factual observation is astonishingly ambiguous: “In this, Sofia’s account fits with those of many white young people and teachers, who focus on niqabs and burqas as signifiers of Muslim religion and multicultural difference.”³¹⁵ Are hijabs, niqabs, and burqas not “signifiers” of Muslim religion and of multicultural difference? Are non-Muslim people forbidden to notice them?

Sofia makes it even worse by further noting that she does not believe anyone bothering the Muslim girls at school. According to the intersectional researchers her “marking of religious difference serves to underline the norm of white Finnishness by highlighting particular Muslim girls as embodying multicultural difference,” hence creating a potential (even if clearly only potential) “reason for discriminating against” them.³¹⁶

Even more amusingly paranoid conclusions are drawn from 13-year-old schoolboy Aleksi’s responses to questions about multiculturalism:

Marja [the interviewer]: I was still thinking about—so about ethnic background amongst your friends so, does it matter at all that, what is someone’s skin color or where their parents are from or—?

Alexsi: Noo. To me the main thing is that you’re a cool person and then like, funny jokes and you get along. So that is, in a way to me for example [it] makes no difference if someone for example, likes some ballet and I don’t, but as long as I get along with them otherwise.

Marja: Right, so all the other things don’t matter?

Alexsi: M-hm (nods).³¹⁷

According to Peltola and Phoenix, the schoolboy here only “encapsulates issues that constitute popular or hegemonic masculinity, being cool and funny, telling funny jokes and being able to get along with other boys.” Moreover, his thinking manifests the evidently unfortunate Western “individualistic approach” when it comes to choosing one’s friends, failing at the same time to mention “skin color or parents’ backgrounds altogether.”³¹⁸

The most stunning conclusion about Aleksis’s attitudes is the scholars’ following line of reasoning: Instead of manifesting open racism, poor Aleksis manifests “masculine sociability. In doing so, he implicitly equates ballet and minoritized ethnic group status as comparable and as non-normative, even as he is asserting that they do not matter. His account subtly reconstructs whiteness and hegemonic masculinities as norms.”³¹⁹ While the interviewee clearly states that practicing ballet is not a bad thing, he—because of his unconscious hegemonic masculinity—implicitly means exactly that. How negativistic can an interpretative use of clear-cut interview material become? Methodology and research ethics are at stake here.

In another school, including more students with immigrant background, the interviewer asks if immigrant boys are treated differently from others because of their background. The interviewees deny this. The scholars, nevertheless, cannot stop speculating if that is the case, at least regarding the apparently harsh use of language among the teenagers. About the schoolboys in question (14 or 15 years of age), the researchers are compelled to note that “it was emphasized that joking was not targeted disproportionately against boys” with migrant background, because “everyone is dissed equally.”³²⁰

Eventually Peltola and Phoenix bring up racist talk during sports classes where their interviewees agree that such behavior occasionally takes place. The interviewer’s amazement on hearing that even parents occasionally yell racist slurs sounds somewhat surprising in its naivety.³²¹ In sports if anywhere, racist behavior has long traditions, often for the precise purpose of mentally disturbing the opponent. This is why international soccer leagues have for decades fought against the phenomenon with their various “No to racism!” campaigns. Muhammad Ali is remembered for calling his black opponents, Joe Frazier and Eric Teller “Uncle Toms.”

The results of interviewing Finnish school children are exactly what the researchers were looking for at the beginning of their research. All their participants were

able to take a colorblind approach at the level of an “all different, all equal” rhetoric because they are all white and take for granted their Finnishness and belonging in Finnish society. They are, therefore, accepting of the fact that they and people like them are the ones who decide whether migrants or religious minorities are accepted as belonging in Finland.³²²

No offered material suggested anything about the interviewees’ understanding or misunderstanding of the problems or the benefits related to immigration to Finland. The children were not interviewed about immigration to begin with.

By the same token, the research team failed to offer any coherent rationale for why the principle “all different, all equal” would not be consistent with the ideal of multiculturalism. With the white fragility paradigm we are, in fact, condemned to lack any such a rationale insofar as we do not begin with discriminating against the guilty group of the entire human race, the white-skinned people—regardless of what they themselves think of their particular national power structures or of multiethnicity and multiculturalism. As we have seen earlier, for intersectional scholars, liberalism and neofascism are but parts of the one and the same oppressive power structure of all Western societies.

Multiculturalism definitely includes acknowledging Muslim women’s habit of wearing niqabs as well as realizing that niqabs are important for them, not for multicultural reasons, but for reasons of their religious culture. Multiculturalism demands respecting cultural traits as genuinely respectable, precisely because they are cultural.

That we should somehow need to hide our recognition that a school girl is wearing a veil is, thus, absurd in terms of multiculturalism. Multiculturalism is about recognizing people with other cultural traits than ourselves. As Professor McWhorter has

noted about woke-ideologists, “Make no mistake: These people are coming after your kids.”³²³

The above-cited article is from the the most confusingly partial, intersectional compilation of articles I have ever encountered, *Finnishness, Whiteness and Coloniality* (Helsinki University Press, 2022). In the introduction to the compilation its editorial team, in addition to many other accusations, claims that Finland “was the most racist country” in the 2018 EU report titled “Being Black in the EU.” This claim was repeated later by other contributors to the book in the form of Finland being “the most racist country in Europe.”³²⁴

Let us examine a bit more closely the central source material for this repeated accusation. First, the said EU report (or its later summary, dated 2019) does not offer any such statement that Finland was the most racist country of those few included in the survey. Second, the study concerned only 12 out of the 27 EU member states.

Third, only the experiences of people of African descent in Europe were under scrutiny—even if, according to one endnote, in some countries, although not in Finland, representatives of other migrant groups were also included. And fourth, Finland, indeed, ranked first, though not by much, when the interviewees were asked about encountering incidents of racial harassment or violence. Yet, on most other topics, such as livelihood, housing, and trust for police, Finland was among the best of all 12, distinctly Western European countries.³²⁵

To console the University of Helsinki racial studies community, one may add that in a later survey of 2022, now including 13 member states, the incidents of racial harassment in Finland had dropped significantly since the earliest survey of 2016, Germany having recently jumped to the first place. Notably, of all harassment incidents among the interviewed migrants, only 4 percent were reported to include violence or a direct threat of it and as many as every third harassment incident occurred among ethnic minority groups themselves.³²⁶

As to the alleged Finnish intolerance generally, the Inglehart-Welzel “World Values Survey 7 (2023),” conducted in dozens of countries across the world, provides a strikingly different perspective on the topic. Such intersectionality superpowers as Canada, Great

Britain, and the United States are far behind Finland and other Nordic countries in toleration for individual self-expression. They are also more religious than the Nordic countries. The United States' ranking in individualistic values is much closer to Northern Ireland and Spain than to any other English-speaking countries and far behind all the Nordic countries, including Finland.

Moreover, the United States is not only a far more religious culture than the mainly Protestant Nordic countries (Sweden is assessed as the least religious country in the world), but also more religious than such mainly Catholic countries as France and Spain. The most religious and most intolerant people (by traditional Western standards), this survey finds in Muslim African and Arabic countries. The countries farthest from the most individualistic and fairly secular Nordic countries are Zimbabwe, Egypt, and Qatar.³²⁷

Alas, the Inglehart-Welzel survey would hardly convince any true intersectionality scholar of anything. The reason is that the kind of tolerance it measures is colorblind, individualistic tolerance for all people on earth. Intersectionality, by contrast, requires a different kind of tolerance for white people than for the rest of humankind.

In short, the intersectional faith holds that, while white people can never be forgiven for their original sin of being white (as John McWhorter has noted about woke-racism), they can be partly cured of their inborn whiteness. The cure consists in turning into a believer in intersectionality so as to be able to blame other white people of their not yet acknowledged inborn racism.

Finally, let us briefly revisit the question of the relation between the two key concepts of intersectional whiteness studies, power and whiteness. This consideration will also provide an answer for the crucial question of whether whiteness or white supremacy exists anywhere beyond the whiteness studies' theory itself.

NON-EXISTENT WHITENESS

The whiteness paradigm rests on the notion of white supremacy, and hence on the concept of power itself. As noted, Michel Foucault thought that we should "cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms," because essentially "power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong

to this production.”³²⁸ Clearly the productive aspect of power appeared to Foucault even more totalitarian and dangerous than any of its openly restrictive functions.

Foucault was not wrong. Yet, the most important aspect of power is left in the margins of his thinking. Power is always, if not negotiable, at least disputable. This is undeniably validated in world history with its ceaseless warfare, revolutions, rebellions, and riots as well as with frequent political disputes, labor strikes, and culture wars. As we have seen earlier, power relations are, more or less similarly present in every academic dispute, bar fight, knitting club member brawl, family contest, and the like.

Most notably, the fundamental purpose of intersectionality is to change current power relations. Intersectional scholars are self-confessedly experts in the Foucauldian practice of questioning the current norms, conceptions, and institutions, all of them somehow connected with the power relations of our everyday life. Moreover, these scholars have proven themselves masters of inventing new ways to police our everyday thinking, including our current use of language as to which words to capitalize or ban altogether.

In democracy, even supreme political power is disputable on a daily basis, given the top government officials’ constant power struggles among themselves. Intersectionality, for its part, seeks to use this state of things to its own advantage. How could it otherwise pursue “the goal of the political emancipation of its own research field,”³²⁹ as intersectional scholars confirm it does?

As we have seen, power for Foucault is always productive rather than openly dictating its orders from above. As intersectional scholars emphasize, power, therefore, has goals, which “manifest themselves through a kind of ‘rationality of public tactics of power’ so as to keep its own strategies anonymous and unidentifiable,” even if the “inventors” of those strategies “are often quite frank and sincere themselves.”³³⁰

Indeed, modern society is based on nothing as much as control. How should one conceptualize this reliance on control, which sociologist Pierre Bourdieu somewhat provocatively called “symbolic violence”? Another name for it is soft power, which is exercised by all sorts of official and semi-official institutions providing

us with laws, bylaws, bans, restrictions, regulations, and recommendations.

Modern society also seeks to extend its already established control of almost everything around us. Historian Osmo Kivinen once characterized the Finnish primary school system thus:

The more modern the school, the stricter become the criteria of what is normal, more subtle become student assessments, more efficient becomes surveillance, the consequence being that more deviations and aberrations are perceived, which, in turn, call for additional, special activities on the part of the school officials.³³¹

In other words, the more society pursues control for the benefit of people, the more abnormalities it automatically finds in their ways of thinking and acting, which the control system then sets out to purge as hindrances to enhancing the general welfare. The question (which intersectionality hardly ever asks) is which abnormalities are assessed as harmful and which as only diversities. Anything can be criticized; the goal should be bettering things without harming those whose behavior needs not be reformed.

Increased control is sometimes merely a consequence of technological advancements. Rarely have parents gained such a powerful tool for controlling their children's everyday life as with the introduction of cell phones. Never before had they been able to demand children report their current activities at any given minute. The same was soon to be the case between employers and employees, not to speak of the networks of safety cameras in every modern city or of the latest spyware technology.

The traditional social studies approach to our constantly changing social customs and practices was to consider them as always historically modified. The public sector in Finland covers 20 percent of the national GDP today. How could it otherwise provide funding and organize the public healthcare system, national defense, free education (up to university level), police force, child protection services, housing benefits, and the like?

This is why it does not make much sense to discuss utopian social orders, which utopians themselves rarely imagine including a

public monopoly of violence, various other power structures, or even people's persistently and somewhat stunningly different views of social justice, the normal, and the reasonable. For those somehow doctrinally opposing power structures as mere power structures, one may suggest becoming acquainted with the history of Somalia ever since the collapse of the central government there in 1991.

How, in fact, was the intersectional horror image of the normatively white heterosexual male born? This is how a Finnish intersectional scholar Minna Seikkula explains the whiteness paradigm via the concepts of power and structure:

Whiteness here refers to a structure of power and privilege constituting multiple attributes (Hage, 2000), which also means that whiteness (as well as other positions in the racialized order) should not simply be reduced to bodily features. And yet, as the effects of whiteness as a structure become tangible in relation to bodies that either pass as white or do not, whiteness becomes both a social structure *and* an embodied position within this overlapping structure. Further, classed and gendered divisions (among others) shape the racialized order dominated by whiteness.³³²

Let us begin analyzing this confusingly erudite summary by noting that for Seikkula whiteness is itself a "structure of power and privilege." This is the first tenet we are expected to submit to. The second tenet is that there is an entity called a "racialized order," formed by the whites to surround their hideous whiteness.

The third tenet is that white people embody a privileged position created by themselves within this racialized social order (of their creation) and hence currently form "a social structure" of their own within the "overlapping structure," apparently of "the racialized order" of things of the entire world. In sum, such social constructions as class and gender are clearly mere subdivisions of "the racialized order [created and] dominated by whiteness." We again encounter the notion of whiteness as a kind of superstructure from which to derive everything else in the world.

Let us ask a few critical questions about all this: Do the Chinese or Sudanese political elites also embody whiteness or do they suffer from some other pathologically supremacist ways of thinking? If supremacy is a white invention, what kind of hegemonic state of mind did the 13th-century Mongolian invasion of Europe manifest? Was it not hegemonic because not purely white?

One of whiteness studies' central claims appears to be that "every racial identification implies a negative judgment of outsiders."³³³ When an Asian American recognizes her own ethnicity (perhaps even feels good about it), why would she automatically need to think of black and white Americans as somehow lesser than herself? This is not explained anywhere in intersectional scholarship, while it appears to be assumed everywhere in the field. Why should anyone embrace such a Manichean view of oneself and others to begin with?

As for Seikkula's conceptualization of white people themselves as "a social structure" within the "overlapping structure" of the essentially "racialized" social world of ours, one should also ask oneself these questions: Where does such a whiteness culture keep its headquarters? Where are all the outlets of this hideous social superstructure located? Before elaborating on the multidimensionality of multiculturalism manifested in current Western societies among their populations of all colors, let us briefly consider how easy it is to confuse mere differences with inequalities in sociological study of cultures.

Sociologist Mike Savage's grand analysis of the growing global inequality and its various forms in his *The Return of Inequality* (Harvard University Press, 2021) is a case in point. His occasionally shaky analysis partly rests on Pierre Bourdieu's sociological studies from the 1970s. The Frenchman once pointed out that in addition to economic inequalities there were perceivable cultural differences among the French, which, in Savage's opinion, combines "the phenomenological world of feeling, intensity, and passion with the structural inequalities that it readily delineates."³³⁴ What is he talking about here?

According to Bourdieu, the wealthy Parisians of the early 1970s, with their expensive cars (Peugeot, Citroën) and similarly expensive pastime activities (tennis, golf, waterskiing, haute cuisine)

lived in other sections of the city than people with genuine cultural capital occupying the Latin Quarter. The rich could occasionally be art collectors, but their interest in fine arts tended to end at that level. People with cultural capital belonged to medium and low-income groups, but were genuinely interested in modern theater (Brecht mentioned), in jazz, in art (Warhol), in playing chess, in Chinese food, and generally in everything *avant-garde*.

From this Savage concludes that “Bourdieu’s thinking offers crucial resources for the inequality paradigm” in terms of “a far richer human understanding of inequality than that which economists have unearthed in their distributional analyses.”³³⁵ As Savage explicates the point, “cultural hierarchies, controlled by powerful institutional and elite forces, were challenged by new and emerging *avant-gardists* who had purer visions of artistic excellence.”³³⁶ Whatever art historians would think of any “pure artistic excellence,” one may wonder why cultures should be thought of in terms of hierarchies to begin with.

“Inequality is multidimensional and operates across several planes,” Savage asserts, going on to note that “cultural tastes, practices, and lifestyles can also be unequal.”³³⁷ This might appear a somewhat strange position to take considering that cultures comprise all national and international power structures, national cultures, subcultures, countercultures and the differences among and between them. Even lifestyles tend to change with every individual over time. Would an elderly person’s lifestyle be somehow unequal to her lifestyle at a younger age?

Let us probe Savage’s grand claim a bit further. As to the idea of “cultural tastes” being “unequal,” should I feel deprived of some genuinely “*avant-gardist*” consciousness or of higher-level “practices and lifestyles” when occasionally rereading my childhood Tarzan comic book stories? Would I, in turn, be sociologically less unequal in my “cultural tastes” (among other Russ Manning buffs) when reading Cormac McCarthy’s novels for which the author won practically every major literature award apart from the Nobel Prize? Or, does McCarthy’s famous Border trilogy turn into a mere popular culture commodity for one who, even while not a scholar in literary studies, reads it for the fifth time just for his own pleasure, as I have done?

Although I have been writing about cultures (mostly of the American past and largely alien to me) for 40 years, I doubt if any construction worker or electrician has ever for a minute felt unequal with me because of what I do for a living. Am I perhaps culturally unequal to my brother who is mathematically more talented than I am? In sum, what do our differences in “cultural tastes, practices, and lifestyles” have to do with equality or inequality to begin with? Why should we assume that people cannot be content with themselves while, if not because of, being genuinely different from others?

As we saw earlier, the concept of whiteness provides no new information about any socioeconomic structures except in the sense that the rich and the healthy tend to do better than the poor and the sick. The allegedly privileged white people live in numerous countries of hugely varying national and political cultures and represent different socioeconomic classes and professions. They embrace different sexual identities and gender identities alongside their uniquely different life experiences. They also represent different group identities and usually embrace more than one of such identities along with their personal identities.

Like all others, white people also live under varying political power structures. No matter how multicultural and equality-committed the actual political power structures happen to be in Australia, in Ghana, in Yemen, in China, in Columbia, in Finland, or in the United States, they each have one. And in each of these countries its particular political power structure is responsible for maintaining peace, the courts, and obligatory educational institutions as well as for executing the public monopoly of violence, national defense, economic regulation, and legislative reforms.

How would we ever address global pandemics, climate change, the spread of weapons of mass destruction, problems in international cooperation, or disruptions in the world markets without such culturally variable power structures? Scholars implicitly or openly advocating some utopian world order, deprived of such familiarly mundane power structures, should explicate what kind of “nuclear-weapons-in-the-hands-of-the-people” democracy they, in fact, are advocating.

The actual political power structures, themselves largely determining political cultures, differ substantively from one another

even among the Western democracies. Consider how different the American, bipartisan political system is from the Finnish proportional electoral system in which more than one candidate can be elected from each electoral district. Even Finnish election debate practices differ substantively from those seen in the United States, because a Finnish politician's debate opponent might be needed as a partner in the post-election multiparty government.

Nothing in all this prevents either Finland or the United States from embracing genuine multiethnicity and multiculturalism under their majoritarian democratic rules with individual human rights. Indeed, Western liberalism, with its numerous political cultures, tends to adapt conspicuously well to multiple national, ethnic, and local cultures, subcultures, music cultures, art movements, academic fashions, and countercultures. Awareness of this multicultural character of hundreds of national and international cultures entails only that even transculturally oriented scholars remain interested in actual cultural practices.

It is, indeed, difficult to submit to any ontology of whiteness when considering that even among white people there are academics, students, business executives, directors, overseers, judges, notaries, nurses, bank tellers, police officers, sailors, truck drivers, mill operators, unemployed, and the like. Like all others, white people differ even from their colleagues in the same profession because of their personal sexual orientation, wealth, nationality, family background, political opinions, and personal experiences of life. In sum, where can one find any such an entity as whiteness to begin with?

Only one of all the intersectional scholars I have ever encountered, Kaisa Ilmonen, dares to state that "whiteness has also been shown to be a diverse and transformative, differentiating and heterogeneous category."³³⁸ If this can be admitted in principle, why is it not indicated in any other of the dozens of intersectional texts I have read? It is not indicated for one simple reason: it would split whiteness apart as a category, a construction, and a structure.

In sum, white males' allegedly hideous cultural whiteness network (homophobic, misogynist, and racist as we saw it defined in intersectional scholarship) does not even exist, not to speak of its supposed supremacy over any other cultural networks. Power is not

equivalent to supremacy, because all power relations remain negotiable or at least disputable within our immensely extensive, private and public cultural networks.

All of us—men, women, children, transgender, and the questioning, with various degrees of pigment on our skin and with our changing conditions of employment, family relations, health, mental stability, musical taste, and the like—live in a particular country, which provides some sort of legally sanctified social framework for our lives, while simultaneously living in a complicated mix of overlapping intersections of many local, ethnic, counter- and professional cultures.

International capitalism, nationalism, and majoritarian democracy have their faults, but to claim that our misfortunes essentially result from the mysteriously omnipresent element of a particular whiteness culture (itself embodying homophobic, misogynist, and racist modes of thinking) everywhere around us is just as explanatory as claiming that the reason for unhappiness in the world is criminal human selfishness. Fighting climate change is a far more urgent task for us than any intersectional dreaming of a utopian social order divested of all power relations—as if those power relations were not elemental to our social life to begin with.

Let us finally take a closer look at how to read the history of colonialism, so crucially important an era to whiteness studies. But let us look at it within the framework of genuinely historical thinking—even if the central lesson is simply that history changes, the past never.

4. The Legacies of Colonialism and the Enlightenment

UTOPIAN APPROACHES

With references to the BLM movement and the debates about the Rhodes statue in Cape Town and the Lee statue in Charlottesville sociologist Mike Savage proudly proclaims that “history is back with a vengeance.”³³⁹ More recently, statues of Columbus, Jefferson, Theodore Roosevelt, and many others have been attacked. Is this vengeance ultimately speaking to anything other than despising the past because people then did not think about the world as people think about it today?

Moralizing about the past has little to do with morality, which is about our respect for other people here and now. History has been used as a political weapon by hundreds of national leaders, philosophers, and revolutionaries throughout human history, just as Putin today reads it for his Pan-Slavic purposes. Historical thinking is not about the use of history for no matter what morally respectable purposes of today.

To be sure, historians have themselves subjected history to various ahistorical and extra-historical grand themes since the birth of history as an academic discipline. Yet, even after submitting to the grand narratives of nationalism, socialism, liberalism, individualism, patriarchy, globalization, colonialism, and others, it remains extremely unlikely that they would permanently submit to the idea of turning history into a mere subdiscipline of intersectional identity studies either.

While the recent, intersectionality-oriented colonial studies model draws on a different kind of master narrative from traditional Western historiography, they both tend to share an old-fashioned

belief in history as a single, inherently rational narrative. The importance of distinguishing this metanarrative approach to history from proper historical thinking is the central lesson to be learned about them both.

Proper historical understanding is distinguishable from both the whiteness-paradigm-based colonial studies model and from the traditional, Enlightenment-based progressive historical outlook. In addition to clarifying this fundamental distinction between metanarrative-based thinking and historical thinking properly understood, this chapter examines utopian history writing, intersectional colonial history, and the Enlightenment narrative of history—all this in order to eventually pinpoint why the discipline of history, by definition, differs from politics.

There are extra-historical human needs (food, shelter, reproduction, and the like) and there are extra-historical ways of reading history. Even the traditional, liberal ideal of colorblindness is a comparatively late innovation in mainstream Euro-American social thought. But is everything Western truly only about the legacies of the colonial era as the discipline of whiteness studies clearly holds?

This is how the totalitarian nature of the legacies of the Western conquest of the world from Columbus up to our current neocolonial era is captured by Jillian Hernández:

With the understanding that racialized sexuality is a colonial product, scholars invested in anti-racism and queer politics have problematized the scientific racisms that have upheld dominant discourses of racialized sexualities by exposing their deficient methodologies, ethical violations, and often eugenicist agendas. Racialized sexualities have been lived by colonized subjects through a wide range of violences via chattel slavery, and in the early 21st century, through eroticized violence such as that inflicted on the Arab detainees of Abu Ghraib.³⁴⁰

The thesis here is that in order to grasp the inhumanity of what a few American soldiers did in the Iraqi Abu Ghraib prison in 2003, one would need to think of it in terms of racialized sexualities and

Western scientific thinking since the 18th century. Is understanding human rights abuses that complicated?

Regarding the remark made about “eugenicist agendas,” are antiracist scholars incapable of grasping the ideal of cumulative scientific knowledge on which also modern empiricism was originally built in the 18th century—at a time when no one knew about eugenics? Or, is the assumption really that the Western scientific community still embraces some hidden eugenicist agenda?

The vengeful, intersectional grievance history of colonialism includes two distinctive problems. The first problem is that colonial studies scholars tend to have no idea how to deal with cruelties and injustices in world history before the hideous colonial era, allegedly responsible for all human inequalities even today (not to mention the intersectional disregard of all positive changes after the colonial era).

The second problem of the one-sided, intersectional focus on the colonial studies is explaining why colonialism (whether begun by Columbus in 1493 or by that famous slave ship arriving in Virginia in 1619) rather than, for example, the Enlightenment (with its commitment to cumulative knowledge and technological advances) should be viewed as the main legacy of the Euro-American imperialist era.

When dealing with the first problem of what to do with history before the modern colonial era, the typical intersectional historical view appears to presume that until now all ancient, medieval, and early modern periods of history have been misinterpreted due to the horrendous historical burden of the later colonial era. This is why, instead of offering new historical knowledge claims, intersectional scholars draw on morally enhanced attitudes toward the premodern eras. Often their suggestions for softening the image of the mysteriously pre-whiteness phases of world history are genuinely amusing.

For example, the medieval Viking conquests (and their colonial experiments in Britain, France, Greenland, North America, and Russia) appear in hindsight too violent and masculine for intersectional historical understanding. The old-fashioned view of the Vikings, intersectional historians claim, would only “reproduce and reinforce structurally violent narratives through exclusion and the normalization of essentialist tropes.”³⁴¹ The new generation scholars

need, hence, to put their “energy toward actively working against the perpetuation of white supremacy through insidious hypermasculine and other narratives based around the Viking image.”³⁴² The world may, indeed, call for more inclusion than exclusion, but such empty scholarly lingo about insidious masculinities all around us is hardly the strategy to attain that goal regarding serious historical research.

Another, more often used strategy to deal with pre-colonial world history is to resort to openly utopian history writing about it. David Graeber and David Wengrow in their renowned, *The Dawn of Everything* (2021), provide us with a cautionary example of this trend. With their archeological and anthropological expertise, the authors claim that the historically most common form of social organization can be found in ancient local communities, which “systematically avoided fixed, overarching systems of authority.”³⁴³ Such communities—once flourishing, for example, in the areas surrounding the centralized, ancient Egyptian empire—should prove to the reader that “complex systems don’t have to be organized top-down.”³⁴⁴

The thesis is intriguing, but the authors never tell us what kind of power structures such, presumably pure, local democracies once upon a time included or should include in the current world. They refuse to explicate what their apparently communitarian, historical wish-image of an ideal human society, in fact, looks like. Of such communitarian dreams of absolute social harmony, Terry Eagleton once wryly noted that “instead of being tyrannized by a universal rationality,” one would be “hounded by one’s next-door neighbors.”³⁴⁵

The actual thesis of *The Dawn of Everything* is that we need to reclaim our (presumably primordial) right to modify our ways of living and even “shape entirely new social realities, or shift back and forth between different ones.”³⁴⁶ Even the question of which “social realities” Graeber and Wengrow themselves would consent to themselves is left open. This leaves one wondering how we are supposed to “shift back and forth between” the current world of the weapons of mass destruction and their ideal community—the kind that “Ice Age hunter-gatherers” apparently already embraced, thus “enjoying something of a Golden Age.”³⁴⁷ Few of us would long to return to such a golden age.

About the modern era the authors of *The Dawn of Everything* consent to hold only that something “went terribly wrong in human history.”³⁴⁸ While it is obviously the horrendous white colonialism that caused all of human history to take such a “wrong” turn, the authors also provide an illuminating example of how to misread the apparently catastrophic Euro-American shift from the early modern to the modern era by losing sight of all post-18th-century Western intellectual history.

In discussing the actual source of all evil in human history—the Enlightenment era—Graeber and Wengrow introduce us to two, allegedly fundamental alternatives for anything worth calling Western understanding of civilization history. The first is the Hobbesian view of the state of nature as *bellum omnia contra omnes* (the war of all against all), which people could escape only by resorting to a strictly organized civil society (in fact, the society of orders). The second is Rousseau’s dream of finding the true state of nature anew in order to develop new modes of civilization based on natural human rights.

After summarily introducing these two, “primary” authorities in all Western intellectual history, Graeber and Wengrow attack them both as old-fashioned. The assumption appears to be that modern anthropology, archeology, and history have all been prisoners of the views of either Hobbes and Rousseau ever since—having never developed methods and methodologies beyond anything possible in the 18th-century world.³⁴⁹ Worse still, it is this heinously backward, 18th-century image of humanity itself that presumably led “the white race,” with its so-called “Western civilization” (quotation marks by the authors), to its colonial policies of mere “genocide” across the world.³⁵⁰

How simplistic an image must one embrace of 300 years of post-Enlightenment scientific thought, even if only Western thought? What the authors’ understanding of history appears to lack entirely is the conception of irreversible historical changes. Most likely such phenomena as urbanization, nuclear weapons, computer technology, global overpopulation, and climate change can never be “reversed” in any serious sense of the term. The idea is hardly that the authors’ idealized local communities (allowing us to shift “back and forth” between “different social realities”) could be set to control modern nuclear weaponry. But neither do they tell us otherwise.

For another cautionary example of overlooking the recent 300 years of Western intellectual history as if non-existent, consider a 2015 published article about “racialized advertising” by Malte Hinrichsen.³⁵¹ The author begins with an argument that “the world expositions [exhibitions] of 1851 and 1854 in London’s Crystal Palace brought together racialized ideas as well as sentiments of white superiority.”³⁵² Such a revelation is not a research result. Anyone even slightly familiar with 19th-century European history would guess that much about those exhibitions without any material gathered from the events themselves—albeit the author himself fails to inform us of the exact nature of the now gathered material.

The article’s actual topic is a set of apparently racist “trademarks like Banania, Sarotti, Aunt Jemima, and Uncle Ben’s,” many of them still in use. Hinrichsen, however, does not care to address the very basic question of what these old trademarks were created for in the first place (with costs of millions of dollars in advertising them over the years).

They were, in fact, created for commercial purposes, not to engage the public with any conscious or subconscious racist messages. The purpose was to make people grow familiar with those trademarks themselves. The function of all trademarks was, and still is, to promote the sale of the products in question as first-rate consumer goods. That is why “Uncle Ben’s” rice is still “Ben’s original” without the picture of that sympathetic old black man.

Instead of giving a single thought to the logic of advertising trademarks, the author goes on to assert that “in the mid-nineteenth century, it was commodity racism in particular that ‘became distinct from scientific racism in its capacity to expand beyond the literate, propertied elite’ and fostered a ‘popular racism, which spread rapidly, taking root throughout Europe.’”³⁵³

What made racism popular is a topic a good deal more complicated than Hinrichsen is suggesting, not to speak of first defining the concept of “popular racism” as distinguishable from any other racism. What he apparently is not aware at all is that imperialism was at the time considered a progressive thing in itself.

What follows is a medley of such remarks as that “chocolate retailers hinted at fantasies of the sexual accessibility of exoticized people.” One is compelled to ask what fantasies of the sexual

accessibility of white women global advertising agencies have avoided during 150 years of the modern advertising industry.

At least an equally simplistic view of the main trends of modern history is embraced by Tobias Pötzsch in his 2020 doctoral thesis on immigrant educational programs in Canada and Finland, titled *Critical Perspectives on Social Inclusion in Integration Education Programs for Adult Migrants*. In this extraordinary example of DEI-oriented scholarship, the author's approach to "critical social inclusion" relies on specific Anti-Oppressive methodologies (AOP), interdisciplinary Critical White Studies, (CWS), and even Critical Migration Studies (CMS). Pötzsch's highly theoretical framework for "principles of critical inclusion" includes questions such as "who is going to learn about whom, and whose knowledge is to be learned?"³⁵⁴

The somewhat far-fetched purpose of the entire thesis is to challenge the idea that native educators' knowledge about customs, language, and social structuration in Canada and Finland would be in any sense more thorough than that of the newly arrived immigrants they teach. This challenge is based on the notion that any properly "collectivist ethical considerations" in teaching and elsewhere—such as, who is "creating space or taking space?" or "who can be a knower?"³⁵⁵—have thus far been entirely, and incorrectly dependent on the "hegemonic narratives" of the West.³⁵⁶

Regarding the actual epistemological basis of immigration education, the author reveals his utter disrespect for, if not mere ignorance of, the history of science and ideas. With its "neo-liberal, managerialist agendas," we are informed, our knowledge production is still "understood securely within a positivist/Enlightenment, (White, heterosexual, patriarchal) framework."³⁵⁷ This is quite a summary of the history of academic research since the 18th century, particularly given that the author does not care to elucidate what he possibly might mean by white, heterosexual, and patriarchal "positivism."

Should we truly conclude that no significant developments in terms of patriarchy, women's rights, or ethnic diversity have ever occurred within the scientific community of the West since the Enlightenment era? Is the assumption that the later development of the 18th-century natural sciences into astronomy, genetics, and

quantum mechanics is of merely secondary importance? Does the same hold true of the developments in the humanities during the last 300 years regarding such fields of study as history, hermeneutics, semiotics, phenomenology, anthropology, archeology, or comparative cultural studies? Needless to say, the essential result of Pötzsch's research is that nothing is done right in current migrant education programs in either country.

Young scholars learn from senior scholars. Let us take a look at how such an established sociologist as Mike Savage lends support to these absurdly simplistic views of Western intellectual history. While Savage calls for a radically new "historical sociology" in developing his own "sociology of inequality," his historical vision draws entirely on the old-fashioned master narrative notion of history. His master narrative is, of course, the colonial master narrative, not to mention his shallow understanding of historical causality.

According to Savage, the modern welfare state has its historical origins in the English poor laws of the 16th century. One rarely finds such a naïve view of historical causality as this connection of the 16th-century English poor laws—or "early social welfare measures,"³⁵⁸ as he calls them—to the early-20th-century Swedish idea of *folkhemmet* (people's home).

The Swedish model, which actually provided the basis for the entire Nordic welfare state model, was based on the idea of guaranteed welfare benefits for all people, not on centuries-old poor relief laws already passed in numerous European countries. By contrast, Savage does not even mention German Chancellor Bismarck's first, rudimentarily modern pension and healthcare systems of the late 19th century, which at least could be thought of as inspirational to the Swedish innovation.

When speaking of current economic inequalities, all Savage's "historical" statements concentrate on lamenting how the "nineteenth-century capitalist imperial modernity engendered a systematic production of social categories."³⁵⁹ Where and when in world history would he find a human society lacking social categories? Is the suggestion that the increasing control of modern society upon us cannot be but ill-motivated?

Savage clearly believes that current neoliberal economic policies are somehow a direct effect of the colonial-era policies. In fact, all kinds of economic systems have been tried in between, beginning with the Soviet socialist experiment and the now capitalistic, communist China. In fact, during the first half of the 1940s in the United States “the incomes of the poorest 20 percent rose by nearly 70 percent—substantially more than those of the wealthiest, which rose by only 20 percent.”³⁶⁰ The percentage of absolute poverty dropped from 25 percent in 1959 to 12 percent in 1969, thanks to remarkable investments in American welfare programs.³⁶¹

True, later on the trend turned backward again so that today the absolute poverty figure is at approximately 18 percent. Even so, Savage’s book-length lamentation about modern capitalism does not contain as much as a passing remark about recent degrowth theories, nor about the 40-years-old ideas about international financial transactions taxes (originally the so-called Tobin tax).

As to the American understanding of the very term “welfare” it is notable that in European countries it does not refer to different systems of poor relief or color-based affirmative action. The European welfare-state ideal is about a society of joint responsibility in which everyone works for the welfare of all and is therefore guaranteed to be taken care of whenever temporally or permanently unable to contributing to the system.

That history indeed consists of sociopolitical and intellectual changes in the West as elsewhere is all too often passed over in the kinds of large-scale historical summaries that Savage, among many others, is trying to sell us. That historical changes are real, that they are often irreversible (like the 1945 invention of the atom bomb), and that they are often changes for the worse is what any genuinely historical thinking requires us to acknowledge.

Savage’s inequality sociology claims ignorance of all that. In a genuinely moralistic tone, he thinks that even the latest statistical data on current income differences in itself “stigmatizes” the poor.³⁶² He also finds something ethically questionable in the unequivocal statistical evidence of the Nordic model’s efficiency in successful equality policies as compared to other Western countries. In these statistics the U.S. consistently ranks at the bottom among all Western nations. The reason for Savage’s indignation here is that such

“ordinalization of nations is far from being a neutral or objective ranking exercise.”³⁶³ While nevertheless himself presenting all this data to his readers, he abstains from offering ethically acceptable, “neutral” or “objective” alternatives to it.

Savage’s endless lamenting about our colonial past and the consequent current state of things culminates in statements such as this: “as the lauding of the Scandinavian model indicates, national comparisons have come to normalize and moralize differing national forms.”³⁶⁴ This is all the more ironic, given that his own recipe for a better world politics entails promoting the Scandinavian (Nordic) model in the European Union and elsewhere.

Should we believe in Savage’s view of Western history as having brought nothing but more misery to humankind since the beginning of modern colonialism? In fact, absolute poverty has been in decline globally since the year 1820. It has been in a deeper decline during the first two decades of our millennium than ever before. As researcher Max Roser writes, as late as “in 1950 about half the world were living in extreme poverty; in 1990, it was still more than a third. By 2019 the share of the world population in extreme poverty” had fallen below 10 percent. Similarly positive developments concern literacy, the general level of education, child mortality, and the spread of democratic political order. Thanks to unprecedented economic growth during this same period, from 1820 onward, the world population has grown 7-times larger.³⁶⁵

Let us briefly consider the properly historical aspects of Savage’s shallow sociological narrative reaching from the early colonial-era atrocities to the current inequalities of the world. Savage’s key argument for his new sociology of inequality is that we are in need of an entirely new, historical sociology. His erudite, but astonishingly empty phraseology about “the integration of both spatial and temporal dimensions” of world developments for understanding “why inequality matters” are far from convincing.³⁶⁶ What sociologist ever, with or without any historical understanding of the subject matter, has claimed that inequalities do not matter?

Let me elaborate what is illusionary in Savage’s understanding of what he calls, the “modernist temporal ontology,” a notion presumably intensifying our current problems with “the weight” of

our horrendous colonial past.³⁶⁷ This is how Savage delineates his “problem” with the concept of modernity:

As Latour (2012: 10), puts it, the “adjective ‘modern’ designates a new regime, an acceleration, a rupture, a revolution in time. When the word ‘modern,’ ‘modernization’ or ‘modernity’ appears, we are defining, by contrast, an archaic and stable past.”³⁶⁸

True, since the American (1776) and French revolutions (1789), Western thought has drawn on the idea that genuine, often irreversible changes occur in world history. Such changes entail that a whole number of old ideas and conceptions need to be dismissed and left behind. But despite what Savage thinks, modernism has never assumed that earlier changes mean that our past therefore becomes meaningless or merely archaic. Modern historical thinking is based on the very notion that there have been significant changes in the past. The present, in the modern view, gains its very meaning in comparison to those changes.

“Sociologists are in thrall to this framing,” Savage nevertheless continues (about his own framing), “which largely reflects that their own disciplinary expertise depends on differentiating complex modern societies (which they research) compared to ‘traditional’ ones.”³⁶⁹ “For both Weber and Durkheim,” Savage further elucidates, “the past is ultimately static, close to ‘nature,’ and lacks the capacity to change.”³⁷⁰ Somewhat ironically Savage here manages to imply that the past should have some kind of “capacity to change.” No historical metaphysics can prove that the past, the object out of which history is written, could experience changes on its own.

In fact, Savage here offers us a stunningly old-fashioned characterization of an equally old-fashioned sociology, the kind that have hardly existed anywhere since the 1950s. In other words, Savage would like us to believe that no modern sociologist before him knew that non-European cultures also have history. Even historians were specifically informed of the matter as long as forty years ago via Eric Wolfe’s classic *Europe and the People Without History* (1982).

The central, underlying assumption of intersectional colonial studies—that the West itself has not experienced any significant changes during, or even after, the colonial era—is absurd. It is notable that, despite what most American historians still appear to think, medieval feudalism has little to do with the actual early modern manorialism still popular in both Europe and the United States during the early industrial revolution.

The early modern society of orders rather than American-style democratic political structures remained prevalent in Europe well into the 20th century. Moreover, even such an innovation as secret elections was introduced in the United States only in the late 19th century. Women were enfranchised in Finland only in 1906, in the United States in 1919, and in France in 1944.

By the same token, one might think of any intergenerational historical responsibility as a somewhat fluid concept given that, for example in the 19th-century Grand Duchy of Finland, only 30 percent of the population enjoyed any kind of suffrage. The sociopolitical European elites and other “white people” were far removed from each other throughout the 19th century.

THE COLONIALISM MASTER NARRATIVE

Let us now shift to the second problem of intersectional colonial history, which is the view that colonialism alone counts as the only essential legacy from the last 300 years of Western history.

Let us begin with the fact that colonial-era history has been carefully studied well before the recent intersectional, colonial studies boom. In the early 1980s one could find historian Arthur S. Schlesinger, Jr. citing the following paragraph of Senator Beveridge’s famous speech from the year 1900, delivered in support of the Philippines war. The speech helps us understand what the colonists themselves thought of their “divine mission” to promote the progress of humankind:

God has not been preparing the English-speaking and Teutonic peoples for a thousand years for nothing but vain and idle self-contemplation and self-admiration. No! He has made us the master organizers of the world to establish system where chaos reigns. He has given us the

spirit of progress to overwhelm the forces of reaction throughout the earth. He has made us adepts in government that we may administer government among savage and senile peoples.³⁷¹

The core of the once extremely popular, Western imperialist thought is clearly present in the quotation: The secretive “spirit of progress” was unique to Euro-American cultures and it was considered their duty to drag the entire rest of humankind toward the better future for all.

As to each imperial power claiming its right to belong to the league of “master organizers of the world,” the Americans had their own theory about it. The reference, as offered in the quotation above, was not to Christianity but to the Teutonic roots of the American genuinely democratic, progressive mentality. Beveridge here embraced an old historical theory of ancient Teutons’—allegedly unique—attachment to local democratic practices, as—allegedly—transferred from the European continent first to England and from there to the British colonies—as if various kinds of village councils were unknown among other European folk cultures (and elsewhere) even during the ancient, Graeco-Roman civilization. To repeat, it has proved impossible to find a human society without any power structures no matter how far in the past.

It is also worth bearing in mind that along with Pacific expansion there emerged an influential anti-imperialist American movement, supported by such contemporary celebrities as Jane Addams, William Jennings Bryan, and Mark Twain. The colonial studies’ prevalent view that white people never truly questioned their self-confessed goals of imperialism is a myth.

Colonialism has been recently used indiscriminately to label, for example, the Finnish oppression of the Sami people in the 1920s and Finnish paper industry investments in Uruguay in the 2020s. Even if American 19th-century continental expansion is describable as settler-colonialism, what then represented the ancient Greek colonies in southern Italy from the 8th century BCE onward?

Such use of terms is of little informative value for any serious historical study of imperialism, even if “colonialism” nominally appears to account for the unvarying sin of Western civilization

repeated from the days of Columbus to the 2020s. History requires understanding the specific place and time in which the examined phenomenon occurred.

The critical importance of the overly generalized notions of the colonial era to the intersectional race theory is worth attention. This is how Canadian scholars explain why, for intersectional scholarship, “reverse racism is a myth” in its intentional “attempts to ignore the power/privilege dynamic between the individuals/groups involved”:

...while assumptions and stereotypes about white people do exist, this is considered racial prejudice, not racism. Racial prejudice refers to a set of discriminatory or derogatory attitudes based on assumptions derived from perceptions about race and/or skin color. Thus, racial prejudice can indeed be directed at white people (e.g., “White people can’t dance”) but is not considered racism because of the systemic relationship to power. When backed with power, prejudice results in acts of discrimination and oppression against groups or individuals. In Canada, white people hold this cultural power due to Eurocentric modes of thinking, rooted in colonialism, that continue to reproduce and privilege whiteness. ... whiteness that has the power to define the terms of racialized others’ existence.³⁷²

The claim here is that racism is possible only among white, privileged people. The reason for this is allegedly that all “Eurocentric modes” of thought are “rooted in colonialism”—a claim which in itself would somehow prove that the privileged white people still “continue to reproduce” their hideous “whiteness.”

Again, no interest is shown in social policy issues, but only in abstractly historicized generalizations, which intersectional scholarship is actually incapable of defining even in terms of which power relations in world history can be viewed as extra-historical (universal) and which historical. If only colonial-era power relations are seen as uniquely important, the entire rest of world history would necessarily remain absolutely meaningless.

Let us consider the intellectual ramifications of all this. The editorial team of *Finnishness, Whiteness and Coloniality* (Helsinki University Press, 2022)—comprised of Josephine Hoegaerts, Tuire Liimatainen, Laura Hekanaho and Elizabeth Peterson—rely heavily on Maldonado-Torres’s systematization of colonialism (bad), coloniality (correct understanding of colonialism), decolonization (incorrectly understood), and decoloniality (correct understanding of the current, decolonized world order).

One might wonder about the actual informative value of Maldonado-Torres’s claims, such as that, “colonialism and decolonization are for the most part taken as ontic concepts that specifically refer to specific empirical episodes of socio-historical and geopolitical conditions that we refer to as colonization and decolonization.”³⁷³

First, colonialism and decolonization are explained only by the terms themselves. Second, there is no indication what “ontic” could mean in this context. Perhaps the idea is simply that the colonial era provided us with (incorrect) social constructions that are presumably ontological in character. As noted earlier, such conceptual “ontology” (existence) is entirely dependent on how any such concepts are, in fact, used by people—whether consciously or unconsciously.

Third, the historical point about all this is stunningly unhistorical. We are again dealing with the familiar intersectional notion that all relevant history consists of Western colonialism as mere “dead weight” (of which Karl Marx had a more nuanced idea) upon our shoulders. Colonialism alone, we are supposed to believe, polluted our present world with patriarchy, homophobia, racism, misogyny, and all other evils of humanity.

The assumption, then, must be that the previous eras of world history would have pointed the way to strikingly different, perhaps utopian ordering of all things in the world today. Alas, no suggestion to even that effect is available in intersectional scholarship.

Intersectional whiteness scholars simply have no idea what to think of world history. Why would colonialism qualify as the sole legacy of Western history? Why would, for example, the Enlightenment-era central notion that human knowledge may indeed

be cumulative not be an important part of our historically informed worldview?

Given that Maldonado-Torres's thesis is referred to over 100 times in the said intersectional compilation of articles, let us take yet another look at his thesis. According to him, we may now enter a brave new world of "coloniality" (as opposed to old-fashioned colonialism) and "decoloniality" (as opposed to old-fashioned neocolonialism) in which we more clearly recognize the dead weight of the colonial era:

coloniality and decoloniality refer to the logic, metaphysics, ontology, and matrix of power created by the massive processes of colonization and decolonization. Because of the long-time and profound investment of what is usually referred to as Europe or Western civilization in processes of conquest and colonialism, this logic, metaphysics, ontology, and matrix of power is intrinsically tied to what is called "Western civilization" and "Western modernity."³⁷⁴

"Coloniality" and "decoloniality" here represent one's genuine awakening (a woke-moment so to speak) to the "true" character of colonization and decolonization. The profuse use of erudite terms is supposed to make all this appear to rest on a deeply thought-out philosophy of history.

With colonialism we are, allegedly, not dealing only with an entire "matrix of power" by "massive processes," but also with "logic, metaphysics," and "ontology." "Logic" hardly changes because of mere historical processes. Even the invention of the atom bomb did not change logic anywhere—before or after the fact. Only the notion of rational warfare changed. Logic remained just as it always had been.

As to the other erudite phraseology here, during my 40-year academic career I have never been required to take a single course in "metaphysics." "Ontology," the study of existence itself, is hardly subject to any particular historical changes even of elemental power structures, regardless of whether we speak of the fall of ancient

Rome, the decolonization of all Euro-American colonies and protectorates, or, say, the fall of the Soviet rule.

Just like David Graeber and David Wengrow, who claim that the so-called “Western civilization” is usable only as an apology for its actual policies of “genocide” across the world,³⁷⁵ so Maldonado-Torres also puts the notion of “Western civilization” into quotation marks. Is this to be taken as a symptom of some more sublime level of academic knowledge among the scholars doing so?

The problem is that we still lack any concrete suggestions by any of the quoted scholars as to what their new system of knowledge and understanding would methodologically look like.

Or, consider Wairimū Ngarūiya Njambi’s transnationally feminist explanation for gender distinctions among African Yorúbás today. All “subordination of females” among the Yorúbá nation has been, in her account, imposed by European colonialism—the original imperialist doctrine in this case being the Freudian thesis of penis envy, according to which women are “without penises, and therefore ‘inferior.’”³⁷⁶ In fact, the Yorúbás were largely conquered 40 years prior to the publication of Freud’s odd thesis on (allegedly universal, not colonized) female sexuality.

It may well be true that age rather than gender had traditionally provided social distinctions among the Yorúbás, as the author notes. Obviously, a further analysis of Yorúbá societies’ pre-colonial-era power structures (even if only in terms of patriarchy and matriarchy) would be needed in order to properly understand what of those structures was broken by the European colonialists. Even Yorúbás should not be treated as if having lived in an ahistorical utopia prior to the colonial conquest.

Indeed, Njambi offers no suggestion as to how sexual minorities were noticed, treated, tolerated, or restricted in any part of Africa before the European colonization. She is content to report that colonial-era laws against homosexuality remained dormant in the law books of independent African countries until the very recent, entirely new wave of “African homophobia.”

Even this sudden hostility against sexual minorities appears to be Western in origin. In addition, the NGOs promoting the cause of African sexual minorities, Njambi suggests, need to resort to

overly militant speech about their adversaries in order to guarantee Western funding for their emancipatory work.³⁷⁷

Either way, Sigmund Freud appears to remain the mythic, “original cause” for all gender and sexual inequality on the African continent. Do we not need a more precise analysis of the causes and effects in order to understand such complicated issues as gender distinctions and the changing situations of sexual minorities in African history?

As we saw earlier, all the so-called racialized sexualities—embodied in the images of “the insatiable lust and spitfire of Black and Latina women, the sexual submissiveness of Asian women” and “the predatory sexualities of Black men”³⁷⁸—allegedly exist as mere products of Euro-American colonialism. This hardly qualifies as a counterargument to the view that most likely people on all continents of the world have embraced quite varied sexual appetites and fantasies throughout world history.

To truly grasp the horrendous depths of colonial whiteness and power relations in the light of the Foucauldian notion of knowledge production, one may think of Professor Siobhan B. Somerville’s claim that “the structures and methodologies that drove dominant ideologies of race also fueled the pursuit of knowledge about the homosexual body: both sympathetic and hostile accounts of homosexuality were steeped in assumptions that had driven previous scientific studies of race.”³⁷⁹

Is the suggestion among colonial studies scholars that various power and knowledge systems have not marched hand in hand throughout world history? This appears to be the ultimate assumption, given that all colonized people tend to be treated as having lived in a human utopia until the European conquest. As noted earlier, even the famous Comanche empire hardly rose on the Texas prairies and plains by mere friendly persuasion of other Native Americans nations, Mexicans, and Anglo-Saxons living in the area.

Should the concept of whiteness explain all the major conflicts and tensions in the world even during the heinous Freudian age of Eurocentric imperialism, how would it account for the conflict of white imperialist powers with one another? Even after the twenty-year-long Napoleonic Wars (1793–1815), which cost over 3 million

deaths among the Europeans alone, the colonialists kept on killing each other.

This is what a preliminary list of their major conflicts with one another would look like: a series of civil wars in Spain (the Carlist Wars, 1820–76); the Greek Independence War against the Turkish (1821–31); the Crimean War setting Britain, France, and Turkey against Russia (1853–56); the U.S. Civil War (1861–64); the Austro-Prussian War (1866); the Franco-Prussian War (and the birth of united Germany, 1870–71); the Russo-Turkish War (1877–78); the Spanish-American War (1899); the Russian-Japanese War (1904–5), and the Balkan Wars (among the Greece, the Turkish empire, Bulgarians, and others, 1912–13).

All this took place among the colonial powers alongside their actual colonial conquests in Asia, Africa, Australia, Latin America, and the North America, to be culminated in WWI (1914–1918) with approximately 10 million European deaths alone, and in WWII (1939–1945) with approximately 50 million European deaths—until the gradual process of the colonized countries across the world winning their independence.

To clarify the differences between historical metanarratives, whether based on the horrendous notion of Western colonialism or on the traditionally rosy image of the Enlightenment-era progressive legacies, it is useful to bring forth a third element to the discussion. That is the methodologically informed, modern view of history itself. We, hence, have three different approaches to Western history, the colonial model (drawing on the whiteness paradigm) the traditional, progressive model of history, and the third, methodologically informed view of history with which a practicing historian should write history. Before going into the details of the third option, let us delineate the so-called Enlightenment master narrative.

THE ENLIGHTENMENT MASTER NARRATIVE

Thomas Jefferson's statue was carried out of New York City Hall in the fall of 2021. The reason given was that Jefferson "embodied some of the most shameful parts of our country's long and nuanced history." Even the journalist reporting the case wondered about the meaning of a "nuanced history" in this context.³⁸⁰ What Jefferson bust has ever been erected to honor him as a racist slaveholder rather

than as the author of the Declaration of Independence and as one of the early advocates of universal male suffrage and religious freedom in the United States?

One of the central complaints of American whiteness studies scholars' is that "stories and symbols created to support southern white supremacy" have remained "intact" after the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. It is notable that when HBO Max withdrew the film *Gone with the Wind* in 2020, even Whoopi Goldberg hoped it would return soon, because she considered it a great movie, despite its outdated attitudes.³⁸¹

The main problem with the colonial history approach to the past, however, lies in its extra-historical concept of "white supremacy" itself. Regarding the famous *New York Times* "1619 Project," some older historians felt compelled to attack its most extreme rewriting of entire American history as nothing but a metanarrative of African American oppression.³⁸² Indeed, there is no point to a historical outlook of the world—no matter how well-intended—that cannot discern the difference even between 19th-century American slavery and the 20th-century Jewish genocide in Nazi-Germany.

Without such distinctions history certainly ceases to be explainable to anyone. In fact, history studies are at the core of any genuinely multicultural thinking, given that the task is to understand the thinking of a different culture in a different place at a different time—even if one is unwilling to accept a given mode of ancient thought as reasonable in today's world.

Most of the time one is unwilling. The reason is simple: Americans live in a different country today than in the 19th century, just as those who lived in the 19th century found a great many things totally unbelievable that many Americans still believed in the 18th century. The intersectional whiteness paradigm clearly holds that no notable changes took place during the entire, horrendous colonial era. The paradigm is historically false.

Looking at imperialist-era history we may, for example, conclude that President Theodore Roosevelt (in office 1901–1909) was a racist by all modern standards. Should we historically, therefore, equate Roosevelt's attitudes with South Carolina senator, Benjamin Tillman, who criticized the president for inviting Booker T.

Washington to a dinner at the White House? Tillman attacked the racist Roosevelt by stating that “the action of President Roosevelt in entertaining that nigger will necessitate our killing a thousand niggers in the South before they learn their place again.”³⁸³

Should we, truly, overlook the difference between these two white men, one supporting the social mobility of black Americans and the other opposing it, and hold that, since our grand concept of racist colonialism covers both attitudes, there never was an authentic conflict between the two?

Is there similarly no authentic historical difference between Theodore Roosevelt’s stand and Thomas Jefferson’s 18th-century solution to the so-called race problem, which was the compulsory removal of the entire African-American population out of the country? Even Abraham Lincoln in the middle of the 19th century considered African-American mass migration as a real possibility. Black American leaders, however, made it clear to him that the only minority deserving deportation at the time were the rebellious slaveholders.³⁸⁴

Genuine historical thought would similarly require distinguishing Jefferson’s democratic claim that all free American males must be enfranchised from Alexander Hamilton’s view that the “real disease” of America “is democracy.”³⁸⁵ When Maryland shifted to the system of equal suffrage for all free men without any property qualifications in 1803, Supreme Court Justice Samuel Chase thought that the state would “rapidly destroy all protection of property, and all security to personal liberty; and our republican constitution will sink into a mobocracy, the worst of all possible governments.”³⁸⁶ By contrast, in 1807 New Jersey revoked its earlier legislation guaranteeing suffrage for wealthier widows and even some African Americans as a “mockery” of this “invaluable and sacred right.”³⁸⁷

If such changes and conflicts regarding the power relations among the hideous whites themselves do not count as consequential Western history, what counts? Let us remember that the American revolutionaries—with all their shortcomings as human beings—were the first in world history to suggest that natural human rights belong to every human being on earth and should therefore become the basis of Western political thought. This they supported against what was still largely considered the only “natural” political organization,

namely the society of orders under which everything remained forbidden unless specifically permitted by someone socially “above” the individual. The change was revolutionary, and while its actualization was gradual, it was real.

Let us, hence, take a closer look at the old, Enlightenment-based, progressive master narrative. The colonial studies’ narrative oddly fails to account for the economic developments that led to the modern world order. What made early commercial capitalism (still within the society of orders) successful was not its presumed technological advantages over all other contemporary civilizations. It was successful because of its banking system, the model being particularly the Bank of England (1694), the example of which was followed by Hamilton’s Bank of the United States (1791). Because of their unique, national financial system, the British could eventually lend money to all their allies in fighting the Napoleonic Wars for the period of twenty years in the early 19th century. As Benjamin Franklin said, “Credit is money.”

It was, hence, because of credit that the industrial revolution and the following, imperialist conquest of the entire rest of the world for raw materials became possible. Allowing changes in the current socioeconomic order, particularly the ideal of social mobility, was to be the new system’s rule of thumb. Behind these ideas was the Enlightenment notion of general human progress regarding the material, intellectual, and moral aspects of life, alongside the entirely new politico-social ordering of the world, including Adam Smith’s inspirational views of a free-market world economy.

Regarding the entirely new, 18th-century epistemological basis of modern scientific thought, even Thomas Jefferson’s writings abound with remarks about how every naturalistic and even religious claim had to bear the test of “reason and free inquiry.”³⁸⁸ His belief in the blessings of new scientific empiricism was well-founded. During the 70 years after Jefferson’s death there followed Darwin’s introduction of biological evolution in 1859, the discovery of radio waves and electromagnetism in the early 1860s, the finding of bacteria by Koch and Pasteur in the 1870s, and the detection of X-rays by Roentgen in 1895.

As Ernst Cassirer once pointed out, the most long-standing innovation of the Enlightenment-era scientific thinking was that of distinguishing systematic examination of things from epistemological

system building. Knowledge could be accumulating even if theologians and philosophers could not yet, or possibly ever, put each new bit of information into any of the pre-known lockers of a pre-established, organized system of knowledge.³⁸⁹ No set of theological truths or system of metaphysics was needed as the ultimate end of human knowledge. The notion of cumulative knowledge rested, instead, on the simple maxim that seeking truth cannot equate with already knowing it.

This is why modern scientific thinking does not diminish in significance because of some eugenicist medical experts' erroneous ideas in the early 20th century. These have all been later repealed by the very same empirical methods. It was this same, Enlightenment-era empirical ideal of cumulative scientific thought that gradually turned old theology schools into modern universities with their distinct disciplines based on different methodologies regarding different goals of knowledge—be they studies in medicine, Victorian literature, or in modern physics.

Along with first commercial and then industrial capitalism, modern Western states began their gradual development into key players in the world politics. Technological advancements would have remained unattainable without an organized system of knowledge stored in government archives and patent offices across the Western world.

The U.S. army won the Great Indian Wars in thirty years (1860–1890) not so much because of its superior weapon technology, but because of its detailed maps and an organized structure as a modern armed force. All those wars cost the government fewer casualties than the one-day battle of Antietam, fought among—still at this early stage of the Civil War—the all-white armies of the Union and the Confederacy.³⁹⁰

Later on, American technological and other innovations were to include writing machines, electric lighting bulbs, water closets, telephones, refrigerators, toasters, department stores, sports stadiums, movie theaters, cars, and airplanes. Without the discovery of penicillin in 1928 by Alexander Fleming and other huge advances in medical sciences the global population growth would have been interrupted by one or another bacteria-based plague long ago.

With their heinously “entrenched positivist notions of how knowledge should be created and assessed”³⁹¹—as intersectional scholarship condescendingly calls them—Western scientists, engineers, and technologists went on to develop radios, televisions, nuclear weapons, space rockets, satellites, home computers, and the internet. Considering the advances in human welfare and knowledge throughout the last 300 years, it is not too surprising that the Enlightenment-based metanarrative of progressive history appears quite rational to a great many Americans and Europeans even today.

The reason why the rest of the world—during and after the 19th-century industrial revolution—appeared to be as a kind of “white man’s burden” was that the West alone had proven capable of creating unprecedented industrial growth and progressive scientific knowledge, which led it to believe that it was, as a matter of basic morality, compelled to drag the rest of the “ignorant” world along with it.

None of this is to claim that early-modern and modern-era white capitalists and government bureaucrats were nice people. It is to claim that while most of them were utterly selfish and some outright evil, they were not a bit worried about their own whiteness, and hence in no need of any particular “production of whiteness.” They were far too busy in adopting themselves to constant social changes of the modernizing world. Neither were the white capitalists much greedier than any other elite in world history, they were only more efficient in satisfying the somewhat universal human appetite for riches.

Why is even a capitalist colorblind? The capitalist sees in another human being only a potential business partner or an employee. Other human beings are, hence, important for the capitalist only as assets in her ceaseless efforts to make profit out of her capital investment—an investment not in other people’s welfare, but in any given business adventures of her own. The more helpless the other human being is, the lower the cost of his labor.

This is why 18th-century racial sciences had much less of a role in the colonial-era social developments than intersectional scholarship would let us believe. African slaves were brought to the British colonies because the early-modern colonial capitalists suffered from a constant lack of work force. As noted earlier, throughout the

17th and 18th centuries, white indentured servants were not treated much better than slaves prior to their release after the usually 7-year stint of compulsory service.

The budding industrial revolution in the early 19th century turned the eyes of the continental European establishment toward white European agricultural masses as the potential work force for the suddenly profitable large-scale manufacturing. As in the United States, so in Europe poor white children were customarily hired (and occasionally sold) to work in the factories still in the early 20th century. As late as the 1920s the U.S. Supreme Court prevented legislation banning child labor as unconstitutional (whether black or white or of some other color).³⁹²

Adult laborers were not treated any better in either the United States or in Europe. American labor disputes led to hundreds of deaths among workers (both white and black) from the 1870s up to the 1930s. The regular army was occasionally used to break strikes. At the turn of the 20th century eastern European immigrants customarily worked on less than subsistence wages. When pure white, Anglo-Saxon suffragettes grew too militant about their demands for female suffrage, they were imprisoned and subjected to force-feeding when going to a hunger strike.³⁹³

Regarding the most fundamental historical changes of the 19th century, Ernest Gellner in his *Nations and Nationalism* (1983) has convincingly shown that it was only because of the industrial revolution that the European ruling elites eventually came to acknowledge their exclusively white, agricultural lower classes as anything more than a source of revenue for their courts and governments.³⁹⁴ These ethnically and culturally varying agricultural under-classes across the continent were suddenly needed for the new, standardized, industrial production in the factories. This is why these ignorant, often illiterate countryfolks needed to be standardized as well.

The hundreds of European folk cultures were, hence, hastily turned into a handful of national cultures. To achieve this, along with composing new national anthems, hundreds of dialects, folkways, and folk-music genres were set aside so as to establish the few selected—allegedly primordial Czech, Finnish, French, German, Hungarian, Italian, Polish, or Swedish—cultural traits as genuine vestiges of an

imagined, idyllic national past. Upon these often entirely artificial notions of a long-standing (agri)cultural unity were formed the particular national identities of the budding industrial nation states.

The actual innovation of the age of nationalism was to distinguish each and every white nation from other white nations. Wherever the Europeans went, they were not worried about being confused with indigenous American people, Africans, or Asians. Genetic inheritance matters only where people allow it to matter.

Even the most (in)famous American history theory, the Frontier thesis, was nationalist in spirit. As its creator, Frederick Jackson Turner was careful to point out, it was the “nationalizing tendency of the West” that created “the frontier individualism,” which had from its very beginnings also “promoted democracy,” to the extent that “the most important effect of the frontier has been in the promotion of democracy here and in Europe.”³⁹⁵ Einstein’s first theory of relativity was published only thirteen years later, in 1905, still in the midst of the colonial era. Knowledge matters.

Even some professional historians believe in the dangerously erroneous maxim that “the meaning of history, its *raison d’être*, is ultimately its use in politics, as an argument in discussing society.”³⁹⁶ This misconception arises from confusing political visions with history as knowledge of the past. Let us conclude with a brief consideration of what historical thinking is all about and what its proper role in politics is.

HISTORICAL THINKING

Historical thinking concerns changes. Some of them are consequential, others less so, while nothing guarantees that they are positive in character. Some are positive, some are not, and to an extent even that depends on who assesses them. Neither do we possess any guarantee that the changes we now see as significant ones would remain so in the future. The reason is that we do not know what lies ahead of us in time. Our often fundamental political differences prove that we do not share any such a common understanding of our common past that we could even agree on what the next logical step ahead would be.

Given that history consists of meaningful changes it entails, first and foremost, grasping the idea of changing meanings over time.

Historians Terence Ball and John Pocock have offered a good example of this. Renaissance natural-law authors faced fierce opposition to their “elaborate technique of applying the rules of Roman law to the judicial problems of late-medieval Europe.” Their opponents were “the Renaissance grammarians, who with the aid of advances in classical philology claimed to be able to restore Roman law to its original Roman meanings.” Yet, “these original meanings,” Ball and Pocock concluded, “often presupposed historically remote contexts.”³⁹⁷ In other words, “original” Roman law made sense only in the particular socioeconomic reality of the “original” Rome.

By the same token, the infamous Jim Crow laws—put into place ten to thirty years after the abolition of 1865—are not to be considered in any sense a direct consequence of slavery. Racial segregation was born in order to keep control of black Americans in lieu of slavery—not because of it. The change was real, just as the entire sociopolitical context was new compared to slavery.

Colonial studies’ prevailing assumption that all colonial developments across the world—say, from the arrival the first slave ship to Virginia in 1619 to the end of WWII in 1945—can be viewed as belonging to one, all-consuming phenomenon of colonialism is in striking contrast with proper historical thinking. So, what should one think of history?

Historical thinking does not assume any extra-historical definition of colonialism just as it does not presume any Aristotelian model of democracy as the basic form of modern democracy. Instead, the historian is interested in the differences between Aristotle’s idea of democracy and those of, say, Thomas Jefferson and Eleanor Roosevelt. Their views of this apparently simple concept differ because of the historical contexts in which each of them happened to define democracy. At the level of microhistory, people tend to experience even the same life events differently. This is why history can never be monolithic.

Racism, with the long line of predecessors, is now put on a pedestal by intersectional scholarship as the true plot of history. Remember the earlier ones: the Enlightenment assumption of human advancements in material, scientific, and moral spheres; the emergence of nationalism as the true master narrative of all history; then individualism; socialism; modernism; globalization;

multiculturalism; a transcultural perspective; and identity politics (with or without explicit commitment to the ideal of multiculturalism).

If we follow the lead of historical master narratives, the whiteness scholars' colonial studies model is just as legitimate in its all-embracing explanations as any other suggested model; so too is the Enlightenment model. They are, however, equally inadequate for proper historical thought.

The notion of history as a grand narrative of the human past has been refuted since the 1960s. The rationale behind this position is that we have no guaranteed knowledge that the entity called human history is, in fact, rational at all—at least in any human sense of the term. To claim that history has some grand plot, some telos, we would simply need to know, how history will end, and that we cannot know.

What makes the grand-narrative such an apparently natural way of looking at history? The reason is that we constantly conflate our notion of advancing time with history as knowledge of the past. The most common, tripartite temporal notion of the past, the present, and the future can be understood in terms of our constant orientation toward the future. We experience time as a constant present endowed with all the knowledge of life we have gained in the past, whereas only our orientation toward the future provides us a genuine free choice of action, the sphere of free will. The past remains beyond mending.

A typical example of confusing history as knowledge of the past with our human experience of time is present in the discussion between documentarian Errol Morris and his interviewee, Donald Rumsfeld. The documentarian asked the former Secretary of Defense if he in his office felt that he was “in control of history” or if history was “controlling” him. Rumsfeld answered that one cannot control history, and continued that “you are failing if history controls you.”³⁹⁸

Rumsfeld talked of history in its grand narrative meaning, namely as an entity covering not only the past, but also the present and the future. Hence, our notion of time as constantly advancing became erroneously equated with history, as if history was not primarily knowledge of the past.

The professional historian should remain in the business of producing knowledge claims about the past, not predictions of the future or political claims about the present state of things. Political claims, after all, are always also claims about how the world ought to be. They are, hence, characteristically visionary claims, whereas historians' claims are truth claims about the past. This is why history is mainly written in order to correct previous historians' erroneous claims. Three points about historical thinking are worth keeping in mind so as to avoid the trap of grand narratives.³⁹⁹

First, once history is understood as knowledge of the past, it becomes evident that the past is the object and history only the discipline studying that object.

Second, one may well view the past as a total mess of intentional and unintentional consequences of human action, natural disasters, and the like—very similar to our current situation with hugely different understandings of social reality around us. Even so, one can still make understandable knowledge claims about the past, although doing so requires letting go of such absurdly theoretical linguistic claims as that what “counts as the same event is precisely what is disputed in every single narrative” of history⁴⁰⁰—as if two historians debating the decisive reason of the Civil War could not be certain that they are even speaking of one and the same war.

The third, and most important point is that the past remains beyond mending. What is done cannot be undone. History is not politics for this very same reason. The best use of history for politics is to keep us as far as possible from any utopian kind of thinking when considering the most efficient way to correct what is wrong in our world today. No notion of historical thinking can be based on creating the world anew, but only on reforming it within the limits set by the inescapable burdens of the past, just as our children are doomed to live with the errors of our generation, or correct them to the best of their ability.

The past is always with us. This is why the only thing we can hope to get in control of is the future. The past lives on in all of us via our language, customs, habits, political and administrative power structures, national cultures, ethnic cultures, religious cultures, atheist cultures, music cultures, literary cultures, various subcultures, countercultures, and the like. Considering our past as a mere burden

or dead weight on the cultures that inevitably shape our daily lives is another line of thought altogether.

Historical thinking entails understanding the simple temporal notion of linearity within which all reforms and novel ways of thinking are, in fact, invented out of the material of our past. What would we ever have been able to achieve without the past? The birth of the 1950s Rock'n'roll would have been impossible without its roots in country music, jazz, gospel, and rhythm and blues. The invention of world wide web in 1989 was preceded by the ARPAnet (1969) and the NSFNET(1986).

Modern human rights thinking has its roots in the ancient Roman law, in the Renaissance revival of that old Roman law, in the writings of the 17th century natural law philosophers, in the American (1776) and French revolutions (1789), and in the United Nations' Declaration of Human Rights (1948). While the old saying insists that almost everything comes from almost nothing, even innovations tend to be built upon what was there before.

Regardless of what aspect of Western history one sees as our central legacy today, it remains beyond reason not to account in that legacy the positive elements of the Enlightenment. The genuinely historical attitude, nevertheless, requires grasping that even its positive legacy cannot be read out of the Enlightenment itself. It must be seen via the later world history developments it initiated.

Along with harmful consequences of colonialism those legacies include our current economic growth beyond any premodern human imagination, our information technology, our current medical industry capable of developing a Covid vaccination within two years after the eruption of the pandemic, modern quantum mechanics, the GPS system, and space missions beyond our solar system—among dozens of other, quite stunning human achievements.

Nor is this to claim that the above developments were in any sense direct consequences of the Enlightenment. During those 300 years of history after the Enlightenment every generation had freedom of choice and reasoning regarding what to even attempt to achieve by itself in terms of industry, economics, science, politics, and ethics. Grasping this is historical thinking.

Our everyday norms, customs, and even our customary use of language contain silent power claims about what is normal, decent,

and acceptable. Yet only by claiming that such things cannot be changed are we claiming that we are powerless over the manner of our own living, and that applies just as well to the “powerless” as it does to the “powerful.”

Politics is not about knowledge, but about envisioning and working toward a better world, whereas historical knowledge cannot be confused with even our most noble visions of how things ought to be. Let us not forget that even conservatives are “progressive” in terms of being future-oriented in their eternal wish to turn yesterday’s society into tomorrow’s reality.

This is also why proclaiming oneself a progressive does not make one a better historian, sociologist, or cultural studies scholar. After all, aside from simple individual human rights issues, all good things are somehow politically charged, and we know that our political opponents think of those good things differently from us. We are all biased, but without our conscious effort to remain unbiased regarding what has already taken place and hence remains beyond correction, we will keep on fighting over the meaning of progress rather than approach any notion of truthful history.

As for the fashionable discourse about memory studies, the lesson is simple: Remember history! And remembering it in any universal sense, cannot be based on one or another single denominator of all world history.⁴⁰¹ The past is simply just as messy as is our present world. Constant negotiating for the best policies of the future for us all—no matter with how different the views and interests we currently embrace—is the only recipe for a better world.

As we have seen, the intersectional approach to history and social studies in general suffers from its one-sided interest in current inequalities of ethnicity and gender, with the assumption that they are consequences of white people’s attitudes rather than of the actually practiced social politics during the last 60 years or so. The blind spot of traditional American history, equally “progressive” in its own terms, has been its stunningly persistent belief in the principle of equal opportunity as the beginning and the end of sufficient, modern sociopolitical thought.

The notorious “burden of history” is not something for an individual, black or white or of some of other color, to carry on one’s

own shoulders. No moral principle can hold a person responsible for things in which s/he personally never had any say. Only one's own behavior and actions can be brought to moral judgement. This is why the "burden of history" should always be understood as a *common burden* for us all. To somehow lighten that burden, one must attempt to do so via politics, with no larger goal than trying to make the world better in the future than it was in the past.

Morally speaking, democracy may look like a moral compromise in itself. Yet, modern majoritarian democracy allows us the right to disagree even with the majority. As individuals we, hence, still carry the moral responsibility for the welfare of ourselves and of all others. Over time, each generation possesses the same moral duty of trying to make the best out of all its legacies of the past.

Just as no generation of our racist or otherwise imperfect predecessors can be held morally responsible for what we do with its legacies, can any historical wrong appear intergenerational right or penalty for an individual. The world is there to be reformed.

CULTURE WARS: BEING JUST OR JUST BEHAVING

The decades-long American culture wars took a turn for the worse once the progressive left assumed as militant an attitude toward them as the conservative right had assumed from their very beginning. All involved now appeal to the same war cry of "taking our country back!"

At least in social media, woke speech appears just as vengeful as any other hate speech. Carnegie Mellon University professor Uju Anya gained over ten thousand "likes" for her 2022 tweet about the dying Queen Elizabeth in which she stated that "I heard the chief monarch of a thieving raping genocidal empire is finally dying. May her pain be excruciating." Mehreen Faruqi, an Australian Green party deputy leader, for her part, tweeted that she would refuse to "mourn the leader of a racist empire built on stolen lives, land and wealth of colonized peoples."⁴⁰² True, "nothing helps a bad mood like spreading it around," as the comic strip character Calvin notes.

An ever-increasing number of more subtle intersectional sensitivity lessons are currently imposed upon academic research itself. As we saw earlier, even the use of clear-cut statistical national

comparisons can now be blamed for insensitivity as “ordinalization of nations” and unfairly moralizing “differing national forms.”⁴⁰³

I recently submitted an article for an international American studies journal with a self-confessedly intersectional editor. She objected to my practice of capitalizing the term “White” alongside “Black.” Only the term “Black” should have been capitalized. I felt somewhat confused, given that the original intersectional claim was that “whiteness is a ‘race’,” although it aims to position “itself into something natural, uncolored.”⁴⁰⁴ From the very beginning, the purpose of the intersectional approach was that of “making whiteness visible against white people’s wishes” so as to reveal the omnipresence of “white fragility.”⁴⁰⁵

Ruminating about the same issue, journalist John Eligon in the *New York Times* failed to decide upon whether to capitalize the term “white” alongside “black.” He concluded his musings by simply citing Professor Crystal L. Fleming of State University of New York, who had “decided to use Black,” because “I want to.”⁴⁰⁶ Are all scholars supposed to submit to any authoritarian whim of people whose sole academic identity is built on the ideal of fighting for the oppressed?

It is well-known that the new scholarly term “Latinx” or even “Latinx+” (for the third gender of traditional Latinas and Latinos) is not popular among the majority of the American Latino or Hispanic population. A 2011 survey revealed that only 35 percent of black Americans would choose the term African American over other possibilities.⁴⁰⁷

Too much sensitivity easily leads to unintentional censorship. Every once in a while I encounter incidents in which a research fellow, this one from the University of Helsinki, repeats the old Finnish dogma that “a white person should *never* use the term *neekeri* (negro).” A Finnish graduate student, for her part, proclaimed that “by repeating the N-word in *any context whatsoever*, it is only normalized.”⁴⁰⁸ Given that the “any context” could include explaining the history of the American uses of the terms “negro,” “Negro,” “black,” “Afro-American,” and “African American,” such proclamations easily amount to clear-cut academic censorship.

Words change meanings in human history. When philosopher Hannah Arendt wrote in 1954 that “No man can be sovereign because not one man, but men, inhabit the earth,” she hardly meant

that only men, and not women inhabit the earth. Nor did she aim to exclude herself from “mankind,” which at the time was a synonym for the later “humankind.”⁴⁰⁹

How sensitive should we grow so as to satisfy everyone’s whims and fancies about how to communicate with one another? Are we overestimating the emotional side of happiness? In the general happiness rankings among different nations across the world, the overall prevalence of “positive emotions” does not equate with high life satisfaction.

The countries ranking highest in “positive emotions” are regularly such as Paraguay, Costa Rica, Mexico, and Laos.⁴¹⁰ In the same surveys, people in the Nordic countries claim to mainly feel melancholic, while ranking as the happiest peoples on earth. Finland was ranked the happiest country in the world for the seventh consecutive year in 2024.⁴¹¹

To preserve positive emotions, the best policy is often to agree to disagree on the issue and shift the discussion to other subjects. But without exercising our individual human right to disagree with one another, no current social politics, sexual policies, equality policies, and the like can be put under the political pressure to bring about changes that any majority, minority, or an individual would deem necessary.

The modern, majoritarian democracy has proven itself capable of major changes including the advancements of women’s rights during the last 100 years, recent same-sex marriage legislation in numerous countries, constantly decreasing poverty rates across the world, and the Obama healthcare reform. At least in Europe people still ponder whether or not legalizing cannabis is genuinely a step forward. Nevertheless, every allegedly privileged white man is under exactly the same pressure to constantly reform his opinions and voting patterns as is any member of any minority living in majoritarian democracy.

Regarding the actual centerpiece of the culture wars since the early 1990s, namely, how a human identity is properly built, one needs only take a brief look at Charles Taylor’s classic texts on identity studies to grasp the following: Identity consists in the continuing, i.e., endless, internal and external dialogue of an individual about oneself and the surrounding world.⁴¹²

This means, first of all, that identity is in just as constant flux as the world around us. Second, it means that no matter how oppressed, despised, or privileged one may feel, identity-building is bound to remain a personal responsibility for everyone of us. Thirdly, and most importantly, it means that individuals do not need to view each and every potential aspect of their identity as equally important for themselves.

For many people, their sexual identity is much less important for their self-image than their professional identity or their national identity. Similarly, for many people their particular skin color is of no significance at all.

To genuinely recognize my fellow human beings as my equals, I naturally think of them as “others” to me. How would any internal dialogue about one’s identity be possible unless there first appears something “other” than that with which one was supposed to identify—were it an imagined father figure or an imagined Finnishness or Americanness? I love deeply my wife and sons, but definitely as others to me.

That other people’s self-image and personal values differ from mine marks only the beginning of a dialogue in which my values and their values might change or might not change, while everyone remains recognized as fully equal with everyone else. Democracy, with its guarantee of the human right to disagree even with majority decisions, was founded for the purpose of reformist debate to continue, from one round of elections to the next, and in between.

The homosexuals’ 50-year battle for their rights required their openly questioning antiquated “normal” sexuality and “normal” marriage practices concerning the most private aspects of human life. Homosexuals, in others words, politicized their case by challenging heterosexual people’s implicit, often unnoticed, power-claims over homosexual people’s needs. Homosexuals won their battle. Democracy made all this possible, because of its commitment to never-ending negotiation over all (even if only potential) kinds of power relations. In genuine democracy, not everything is political, but anything can be politicized.

Concluding Remarks

We have now seen how intersectional scholars—in their own words—formulate their most fundamental scholarly positions. Their only innovation in social sciences has been proven to consist of the allegedly explanatorily omnipotent whiteness paradigm. We have also seen that no such entity as whiteness can be, in fact, located anywhere among the whites, nor among people of some other skin color.

To put it simply, some people of color, just like some white people, are homophobic. Some people of color, just like some white people, are homosexual (and perfectly happy with it). Some people are disabled, some people openly queer, some people something else entirely. Some people understand multiculturalism, some do not. Some people respect majoritarian democratic power structures, some people do not. Many people appear not to know much of democracy, even while living in one, because tyrannies are so much easier to discern.

Most people (of any color) do not grasp that modern cultures tend to gain stricter control of our lives, even if usually in order to make life easier for us in our current social world—a world constantly developing more complicated in terms of social and economic structures.

Most conspicuously, the larger public has no clue to what intersectionality even means, although its advocates have already managed to intrude their abstract vocabulary of whiteness and often quite absurd social views into the highest administrative offices in countries such as Finland and the United States—the first known for its exceptional welfare benefits and fair labor policies and the second for its driving economy and its leading position among all the capitalist countries in the world.

Neither does the academic community seem to recognize the absolute emptiness of the intersectional methodological toolkit,

when it comes to even such a primitive level of analytic thinking as that of distinguishing between economic, political, mental, and social structures. This is the reason for intersectional scholarship's frequent confusion of mere human differences with social disadvantages.

Every individual's so-called intersectional positions—as able or less so, as wealthy or less so, as educated or less so—tend to change over time. Similarly, the very meanings of gender, sexuality, and ethnicity vary according to where and when they happen to be assessed and by whom. While differing from each other, such identity positions cannot be proven to be inherently unequal.

In Western societies, the causes of actual marginalization tend to concern a person's physical health, mental health, educational and professional ambitions, income level, housing conditions, family issues, and the like. In concentrating on inquiries into how deeply traumatized one may feel as a member of this or that particular minority group, the intersectional approach ignores this fundamentally individual aspect of social justice.

In order to offer actual help in any of the dozens of possible problems that people experience during their lives the simple question to be asked is: "What is the matter with You?" Not incidentally, this is the question the Nordic welfare system asks from anyone in need of help—regardless of the person's gender, ethnicity, sexuality, age, or any other possible minority or majority status.

The whiteness paradigm itself, as we have seen, draws on the old-fashioned grievance studies of colonial history, with its additional tenets of white people still "racializing" other ethnic groups, as if Western science has not rejected its ancient race theories over 100 years ago and dismissed all legal segregation systems over a half century ago. Among all academics only intersectional scholars call for reinvigorating the idea of the already dismissed racial discrimination so as to compel all white people to confess their allegedly inborn racism.

The problem with intersectional historical thinking is that it does not represent historical thinking. Instead, intersectional whiteness studies scholars use history for their extra-historical purposes of keeping alive and reinvigorating their monster concept of whiteness as the allegedly fundamental reason for all inequalities in the modern world.

This they achieve by focusing solely on the negative sides of colonial-era history, as if no previous world history knows of conquerors of all skin colors just as egoistic, greedy, and crude, although with considerably less financial and technological resources than the 19th-century Euro-American imperialist powers.

Moreover, intersectional “historical” thinking consistently ignores that those same colonial powers also brought along the seeds of early human rights thinking, modern democracy, modern medical sciences, and unprecedented scientific progress in all other fields of human knowledge—along with the still continuing, 300-year-long period of global economic growth, benefitting even the poorest countries of the world today.

Most conspicuously, intersectional scholars insist that whiteness, as a particular form of white racism, does not equate with any ethnic or group prejudices among all ethnic groups in world history, but represents something far deeper and more horrendous because of its colonial background and its alleged invisibility. They further hold that, not only racists, but all whites clinging to modern liberal values need to be turned into intersectional thinkers through special therapy treatments. We are dealing with an ideology, not with any properly academic school of new research interests.

The academically most troubling trait of intersectionality lies in its epistemological indifference to anything properly epistemological. One does not attain valid knowledge of anthropology, astronomy, history, literature, social sciences, social politics, or world politics from any “unique epistemological position” of a “marginalized” human being as compared to other, no matter how “privileged,” human beings.

Discrimination may deprive a person of access to knowledge but it may never provide one with some special kind of epistemologically valid knowledge. Nor does depravity make anyone an expert in social studies. We know or we do not know or we only think we know. To repeat, we are all opinionated, but the most elemental methodological rules are not a matter of opinion—not even in social sciences and the humanities.

Intersectionality’s additional oddity, its total disregard of any genuinely cultural way of living, results from its obsessively and exclusively transcultural worldview. As we have seen,

intersectionality is not interested even in national cultures as genuinely different from each other. In fact, one may well compare American and Finnish cultures without any suggestion that they are somehow essentially unequal in comparison. Similarly, such claims as that our “cultural tastes” are, by definition, unequal instead of merely different approach absurdity on any individual level of human experience.

Disregard of multiculturalism itself is the most astonishing aspect of intersectionality. One wears a niqab not in order to prove one’s multiculturalism, but to manifest one’s religious convictions as important identity traits for oneself. Yet, contrary to the intersectional insistence that white people inherently lack unconditional empathy for every person wearing a niqab, an atheist most probably respects a devout Buddhist, Christian, or a Muslim best by directing conversations with them to some topics than religion.

To me, as a white, Finnish historian the thinking patterns of pale-white Finnish plumbers tend to appear far more alien than those of my American academic colleagues. Nor have I ever felt any need to question my heterosexuality when discussing history, politics, personal life experiences, or questions of sexual identity with my homosexual acquaintances and relatives.

I renounce any such an intersectional social order in which I would be assessed as a human being primarily according to my skin color, gender, sexual orientation, profession, nationality, or some minority status. Neither do I accept that my elder son would be assessed by such criteria, although his skin color differs from mine.

There is only one standard according to which a person’s ethical stand can be assessed, namely how one treats other people. As C.L.R. James (the first black biographer of Toussaint L’Ouverture) noted in the 1930s, “blacks, like horses, dogs, cats and some wild animals, judged a man not by the color of his skin but by the way he behaved.”⁴¹³

Academic research on discrimination, marginalization, and social deprivation is too important to be left to the mercies of the methodologically incompetent, deep down paranoid intersectional whiteness paradigm.

As for its huge popularity, one must admit that the damage is done. For damage control, every university dean, every head of department, every other university administrator, and every member of teaching faculty must think anew about how long we can afford to go on discrediting our academic research culture by failing to openly reject the intersectional pseudoscience of whiteness studies.

ENDNOTES

¹ John McWhorter, *Woke Racism: How a New Religion Has Betrayed Black America* (New York: Random House, 2021); Glenn Loury, "Unspeakable Truths about Racial Inequality in America," *Quillette*, Feb. 10, 2021:

<https://quillette.com/2021/02/10/unspeakable-truths-about-racial-inequality-in-america/>

(accessed Feb. 13, 2021); On antiracism representing a mere cult, see Vincent Lloyd, "A Black Professor Trapped in Anti-Racist Hell," *Compact*, Feb. 10, 2023:

<https://compactmag.com/article/a-black-professor-trapped-in-anti-racist-hell> (accessed June, 12, 2023).

² See Minna Seikkula, "(Un)making 'extreme' and 'ordinary' whiteness: Activists' narratives on antiracist mobilisation in Finland," *Sociological Review*, vol. 67 (5, 2019), 1002-1017 (Helka, Tuhat-sivusto: <https://helda.helsinki.fi/handle/10138/307660>, accessed, May 9, 2023);

Quotation on "scientifically," Suvi Keskinen & Minna Seikkula, "Käänteisrasmin mahdottomuus," *Raster.fi*, Rasisminvastainen tutkijaverkosto, Oct. 27, 2015:

<https://raster.fi/2015/10/27/kaanteisrasmin-mahdottomuus/> (accessed June 24, 2022).

³ See Peter Kolchin, "Whiteness Studies: A New History of Race in America," *The Journal of American History*, vol. 89 (1, 2002), 154-173, quotation, 154.

⁴ Teresa Guess, "The Social Construction of Whiteness: Racism by Intent, Racism by Consequence," *Critical Sociology*, vol. 42, (4, 2006), 649-673, quotations, 660, 668.

⁵ Kirsten Weir, "Raising anti-racist children," *Monitor on Psychology*, vol. 52, (2021), American Psychological Association: <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2021/06/anti-racist-children> (accessed, Dec. 5, 2022).

⁶ Josephine Hoegaerts, Tuire Liimatainen, Laura Hekanaho & Elizabeth Peterson, "An Introduction," *Finnishness, Whiteness and Coloniality*, ed. by Josephine Hoegaerts, Tuire Liimatainen, Laura Hekanaho & Elizabeth Peterson (Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 2022), 1-16, 6 [The compilation will be henceforth referred as Hoegaerts et al. 2022.]

⁷ Eveliina Heino, "Intersektionaalisuus sosiaalityössä," *Janus*, vol. 31 (1, 2023) 60-79, 73.

⁸ Hoegaerts et al. 2022, 5.

⁹ Guess 2006, 668.

¹⁰ Mike Ely, "Black president in the White House," *LINKS (International Journal of Socialist Renewal)*, Jan., 23, 2009: <https://links.org.au/black-president-white-house-not-same-old-white-supremacy> (accessed July 6, 2023).

¹¹ Kimberle Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics," *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, vol. 1, 1989, 139-167, see esp., 157.

¹² ACLRC, "The Myth of Reverse Racism," The Alberta Civil Liberties Research Centre (ACLRC) / Calgary Antiracism Education website: <https://www.aclrc.com/myth-of-reverse-racism> (accessed June 24, 2022).

¹³ Jennifer Ho, "White supremacy is the root of all race-related violence in the US," *The Conversation*, April, 8, 2021: <https://theconversation.com/white-supremacy-is-the-root-of-all-race-related-violence-in-the-us-157566> (accessed Dec. 12, 2021).

¹⁴ On the same notion of the original sin as related to woke racism, see John McWhorter, *Woke Racism: How a New Religion Has Betrayed Black America* (New York: Random House), 2021, 30-31.

¹⁵ "And I feel so much shame," Arguette added to which someone offered a consoling comment: "Don't worry, we're all embarrassed of you too." See Cydney Henderson, "Rosanna Arquette slammed for saying she 'feels so much shame,'" *USA Today*, Aug. 8, 2019:

- <https://eu.usatoday.com/story/entertainment/celebrities/2019/08/08/rosanna-arquette-feels-so-much-shame-over-being-white-privileged/1962475001/> (accessed Jan. 6, 2022); On the Finnish comments, see Miika Koskela, "Moni käyttää omaa ihonväriään tummempia emojiä – Sopiiko valkoisen somettajan viestillä ruskealla peukulla?" *Yle News*, April 17, 2021: <https://yle.fi/uutiset/3-11822638> (accessed Jan. 18, 2022).
- ¹⁶ Bridey Taylor, "Intersectionality 101: What is it and why is it important?" Nov. 17, 2019 (at the feminist women's rights and aid organization, *medica mondiale* info pages): <https://medicamondiale.org/en/service/glossary/intersectionality-multiple-discrimination> (accessed, Feb. 15, 2024).
- ¹⁷ A-studio, Finnish National TV news magazine broadcast, *Yle 1*, Nov. 22, 2021: <https://areena.yle.fi/1-50646660> (accessed Nov. 23, 2021); See on the same, Alina Mäkynen & Päivi Suikkanen, "Pelko on yhteistä meille kaikille," *Yle* channel article, Nov. 22, 2021: <https://yle.fi/a/3-12199142> (accessed April 10, 2023).
- ¹⁸ Tyler Dawson, "Book burning at Ontario francophone schools as 'gesture of reconciliation' denounced," *National Post*, Sept. 9, 2021: <https://nationalpost.com/news/canada/book-burning-at-ontario-francophone-schools-as-gesture-of-reconciliation-denounced>; See also, Abby Neufeld, "Ontario school board 'regrets' burning books in the name of reconciliation as part of educational program," *CTV News*, Sept. 10, 2021: <https://toronto.ctvnews.ca/ontario-school-board-regrets-burning-books-in-the-name-of-reconciliation-as-part-of-educational-program-1.5580647> (both accessed, Dec. 19, 2021).
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- ²⁰ Jussi Mankkinen, "Kirjallisia teoksia sensuroidaan taas urakalla," *Yle News*, March 1, 2023: <https://yle.fi/a/74-20020363> (accessed March 2, 2023); Rachel Hall, "Agatha Christie novels reworked to remove potentially offensive language," *Guardian*, March 26, 2023: <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2023/mar/26/agatha-christie-novels-reworked-to-remove-potentially-offensive-language> (accessed March 27, 2023).
- ²¹ Ed Cumming, Abigail Buchanan, Genevieve Holl-Allen & Benedict Smith, "The Rewriting of Roald Dahl," *The Telegraph*, Feb. 24, 2023: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2023/02/17/roald-dahl-books-rewritten-offensive-matilda-witches-twits/> (accessed, May 4, 2023).
- ²² The referred opinion writing was in *Irish Times*, established in 1859, see Johanna Vehkoo, "Mediakolumni: Älytön juttu," *Suomen kuvalehti*, May 22, 2023: <https://suomenkuvalehti.fi/mielipide/lehti-halusi-klikkeja-seula-petti-ja-tekoalyn-kirjoittama-provosoiva-kolumni-meni-sukkana-lapi/> (accessed May 24, 2023).
- ²³ Jonathan Kay, "How woke can you go? In 2021, the answer was 'very', apparently," *National Post*, Dec. 28, 2021: <https://nationalpost.com/opinion/how-woke-can-you-go-in-2021-the-answer-was-very-apparently> (accessed Jan 2, 2022).
- ²⁴ McWhorter 2021, 32.
- ²⁵ Steven Pinker & Bertha Madras "Why We Created Harvard's Academic Freedom Council," *Persuasion Website*, April 21, 2023: <https://www.persuasion.community/p/why-we-created-harvards-academic> (accessed, April, 22, 2023).
- ²⁶ For the term "power structure" in intersectional scholarship, see, for example, Hoegaerts et al. 2022, 6; Ely 2009.
- ²⁷ Veijo Meri, *Ei tule vaivatta vapaus. Suomi 1870–1920* (Helsinki: Otava, 1995), 509.
- ²⁸ For quotations, see Marja Peltola & Ann Phoenix, "Doing Whiteness and Masculinities at School: Finnish 12- to 15-Year-Olds' Narratives on Multiethnicity" in Hoegaerts et al. 2022, 101–128, 105; Some terminological changes are discernible in the field. "White supremacy" has been later replaced by mere "whiteness" whereas new jargon includes terms such "anti-oppressive" and harmful "framing."

- ²⁹ Merriam-Webster Thesaurus Dictionary: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/intersectionality> (accessed April, 24, 2023).
- ³⁰ Heino 2023, 62.
- ³¹ Taylor 2019.
- ³² Lena Näre, "Identiteettipulismia vai intersektionaalista identiteettipolitiikkaa?" *Sosiologia*, vol. 60 (1, 2023), 37–41, 38.
- ³³ Peltola & Phoenix 2022, 101–128, 105.
- ³⁴ Guess 2006, 660.
- ³⁵ Seikkula, 2019.
- ³⁶ Seikkula 2019.
- ³⁷ Hoegaerts et al. 2022, 5–6.
- ³⁸ Kaisa Ilmonen, "Intersektionaalisen queer-tutkimuksen kytkentöjä: Pohdintoja postkoloniaalisen ja intersektionaalisen seksuaalisuudentutkimuksen lähtökohdista ja keskeisistä kysymyksistä," *SQS, Suomen Queer-tutkimuksen Seuran lehti* [Finnish Queer Studies Association], vol. 5 (2, 2011) [Internet publication, 16 pages, no page numbers]: <https://journal.fi/sqs/article/view/50863> (accessed May 10, 2023).
- ³⁹ Quotation, Heino 2023, 73.
- ⁴⁰ See for S. Ahmed's formulation as quoted in Tobias Pötzsch, *Critical Perspectives on Social Inclusion in Integration Education Programs for Adult Migrants* (Ph.D. thesis, Helsinki: University of Helsinki & Unigrafia, 2020), 253.
- ⁴¹ Peltola & Phoenix 2022, 103.
- ⁴² ACLRC 2022.
- ⁴³ ACLRC 2022.
- ⁴⁴ Ho 2021.
- ⁴⁵ For a notion about the famous section of the Book of Gates that "the Egyptians divided all people into 'Libyans', 'Nubians', 'Asiatics', and 'Egyptians'," and that "all races were welcome in the afterworld and all are depicted journeying through its chambers," see Ancient Egypt Online: <https://ancientegyptonline.co.uk/bookgates/> (accessed May 17, 2024).
- ⁴⁶ See Pekka Hämäläinen, *The Comanche Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).
- ⁴⁷ Angus Madison, "Poor Until 1820: Per Capita Income in World History": <http://econ2.econ.iastate.edu/classes/econ355/choi/rankh.htm>; See also Max Roser, "Economic Growth". <https://ourworldindata.org/economic-growth> (both accessed Aug. 7, 2022).
- ⁴⁸ Yet, in Finland the latest modification of language is to claim (as the issue is approached even in Finnish school curriculum today) that equality (*tasa-arvo*) concerns only gender equality whereas only the term equity (*yhdenvertaisuus*) would refer to general equality between all people, including ethnic and sexual minorities. This distinction has been established on the grounds of there being separate laws in Finnish legislation, first, for basic gender equality between men and women (*tasa-arvolaki*, 1986) and secondly, a law for equity (*yhdenvertaisuuslaki*, 2014). However, any suggestion that only equity, as if in contrast to "mere" equality, would cover minorities is not included in the Finnish constitution. The Chapter 2, Section 6 of the Finnish constitution states unequivocally that "everyone is equal before the law," and that no one shall "be treated differently from other persons on the ground of sex, age, origin, language, religion, conviction, opinion, health, disability or other reason." Equality, hence, is based solely on individuality of everyone, instead of any reference to a given group identity. Even "children shall be treated equally and as individuals." Similarly, the Finnish government documents use the term equity (correctly) in reference to equality policies (*tasa-arvopolitiikka*). See, *Laki naisten ja miesten tasa-arvosta* (1986), Finlex: <https://finlex.fi/fi/laki/ajantasa/1986/19860609#P5>; *Yhdenvertaisuuslaki* (2014), Finlex: <https://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/alkup/2014/20141325>; *Suomen perustuslaki*, The Finnish Constitution (1999), Finlex: <https://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/ajantasa/1999/19990731> (all accessed May 31, 2023); On Finnish governmental memos on equity and equality, see also,

“Valtioneuvoston tasa-arvopoliittinen selonteko,” Valtioneuvoston julkaisu 2022: 49 (Helsinki: Valtioneuvosto 2022): <https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/handle/10024/164219> (accessed March 16, 2023).

⁴⁹ Quotation, Heino 2023, 73; See also Robin DiAngelo, “White Fragility,” *International Journal of Critical Pedagogy*, vol. 3 (3, 2011), 54-70; Peltola & Phoenix, 2022, 105.

⁵⁰ The statement on Atwood was made by Hannah McGregor, see Jonathan Kay, “Why They Hate Margaret Atwood,” *Quillette*, March 15, 2018: <https://quillette.com/2018/03/15/hate-margaret-atwood/> (accessed Dec. 12, 2021).

⁵¹ The statement is from Grace Elizabeth Hale, quoted here as in Kolchin 2002, 168; Hale is white herself.

⁵² Guess 2006, 668.

⁵³ Ely 2009.

⁵⁴ This is confirmed in Kendi’s own words: “... you have black people, a limited number, who are in policy-making positions and use those policy-making decisions to institute or defend policies that harm black people. If those people were white we would be calling them what they are—racists. If they’re black, they’re no different. They’re racists.” No doubt, Barack Obama would qualify as a racist according to these definitions. See John Blake, “Sure, black people can be racists, too,” CNN, Sept. 22, 2019:

<https://edition.cnn.com/2019/09/22/us/kendi-book-anti-racist-blake/index.html> (accessed March 19, 2024).

⁵⁵ The Finnish Law on Equity, Yhdenvertaisuuslaki (“Non-Discrimination Act,” 2014) states about promoting equality (§9): “Proportionate different treatment that aims to promote de facto equality, or to prevent or remove the disadvantages attributable to discrimination, does not constitute discrimination.” Suomen Yhdenvertaisuuslaki (2014), Finlex:

<https://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/alkup/2014/20141325> (accessed July 20, 2024).

⁵⁶ “How Should I Talk about Race in My Mostly White Classroom?” Anti-Defamation League, 2017: <https://www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/how-should-i-talk-about-race-in-my-mostly-white-classroom> (accessed Dec. 21, 2021).

⁵⁷ Greg Piper, “Elite private school hosts racially segregated ‘dialogue sessions’ with parents, teachers,” College Fix website, Jan. 28, 2021: <https://www.thecollegefix.com/elite-private-school-hosts-racially-segregated-dialogue-sessions-with-parents-teachers/>; Chrissy Clark, “California School District Promotes Segregated ‘Black Parent’ Meeting,” *Daily Wire*, Feb. 25, 2021 (both accessed, Jan. 2, 2022).

⁵⁸ On the popularity of the diagram in Finland, see for example, Jari Karttunen & Heini Ikkäheimo, “Tasa-arvo ja yhdenvertaisuus osana ammatillisen opettajan ydinosaamista,” JAMK Blogs, Jyväskylän ammattikorkeakoulu, Sept. 7, 2021: <https://blogit.jamk.fi/aokkhankeet/tasa-arvo-ja-yhdenvertaisuus-osana-ammattillisen-opettajan-ydinosaamista> (accessed Dec. 1, 2021); The diagram was also presented to the entire staff of the faculty of the humanities at the University of Helsinki in the October 2021 staff meeting by the pedagogies from the faculty of educational sciences.

⁵⁹ For the figures, see Veronmaksajien keskusliitto, “Julkiset menot,” Jan. 10, 2024: <https://www.veronmaksajat.fi/tutkimus-ja-tilastot/suomen-verot-ja-menot/julkiset-menot/#5028c250> (accessed Feb. 24, 2024).

⁶⁰ Vasemmistoliitto, the Left Alliance in Finland, “Uuden hyvinvoinnin aika -tavoiteohjelma,” 2022: <https://www.fsd.tuni.fi/pohtiva/ohjelmalistat/VAS/1462> (accessed May 4, 2023); Alternatively, one may visit the Left Alliance English website at <https://vasemmisto.fi/themes-and-values/reducing-inequality/> (accessed Feb. 24, 2024).

⁶¹ See the World Bank data: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SH.XPD.CHEX.GD.ZS>; see also “Countries ranked by life expectancy,” WorldOMeter: <https://www.worldometers.info/demographics/life-expectancy/> (both accessed Oct. 17, 2020).

⁶² “How did American ‘wokeness’ jump from elite schools to everyday life?” *The Economist*, Sept. 4, 2021: <https://www.economist.com/briefing/2021/09/04/how-did-american-wokeness-jump-from-elite-schools-to-everyday-life> (accessed Nov. 29, 2021).

⁶³ For the quotation, see John Preston, *Disaster Education: ‘Race’, Equity and Pedagogy* (Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 2012), 19; See on Roderick Ferguson’s famous claim that it is capitalism that turns the entire queer culture “one-dimensional,” Clayton Delery, Review of Ferguson’s *One-Dimensional Queer* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2018), *New York Journal of Books* (undated): <https://www.nyjournalofbooks.com/book-review/one-dimensional-queer> (accessed May 12, 2023).

⁶⁴ See for example, Angus Madison, “Poor Until 1820: Per Capita Income in World History”: <http://econ2.econ.iastate.edu/classes/econ355/choi/rankh.htm> (accessed Aug. 7, 2022).

Madison’s estimates of per capita income in 1990 USD are the following: the world in the year of 1500: 545 USD/year and in 1995: 5,188 USD/year; in Western countries the growth was much bigger: the year of 1500: 624 USD/year, the year of 1995: 19,900 USD/year; On Botswana figures, see for example, Max Roser, “Economic Growth”, WorldInData-sivusto: <https://ourworldindata.org/economic-growth> (accessed Aug. 7, 2022).

⁶⁵ Greg Iacurci, “Many Americans, especially families, can’t live on a \$15 minimum wage”, CNN News, Feb. 21, 2021: <https://www.cnn.com/2021/02/21/15-minimum-wage-wont-cover-living-costs-for-many-americans.html> (accessed May 11, 2021); Marcela Escobari, “The economy is growing and leaving low-wage workers behind”, Brookings Institute, Dec. 19, 2019: <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/education-plus-development/2019/12/19/the-economy-is-growing-and-leaving-low-wage-workers-behind/> (accessed May 11, 2021).

⁶⁶ See on these numbers from 2020, “Current Global Health Expenditure,” World Bank data: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SH.XPD.CHEX.GD.ZS> (accessed Oct. 17, 2020).

⁶⁷ See for a quite recent ruling in Oregon about easing the standards of high school education, as earlier in “How did American ‘wokeness’ jump,” *The Economist*, Sept. 4, 2021.

⁶⁸ See Hai Nguyen & Aisha Benahmed, “Mitkä ovat ne keinot jotka Marja, Osmo ja Esko hyväksyisivät meidän yhteisten hyvien tavoitteiden ajamiseksi?” FEM-R Website, Nov. 23, 2021: <https://www.fem-r.fi/mitka-ovat-ne-keinot-jotka-marja-osmo-ja-esko-hyvakysyisivat-meidan-yhteisten-hyvien-tavoitteiden-ajamiseksi/> (accessed Dec. 1, 2021).

⁶⁹ Barack Obama, *Luvattu maa (A Promised Land)*, transl. into Finnish by Seppo Raudaskoski, Kyösti Karvonen & Ilkka Rekiaro (Keuruu: Otava, 2020), 509.

⁷⁰ Ta-Nehisi Coates, “My President was Black,” *The Atlantic*, Jan/Feb. 2017 at: <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2017/01/my-president-was-black/508793/> (accessed, Feb. 28, 2024).

⁷¹ See, for example, my critique about empiricism (Chapter 3) concerning Marja Peltola & Ann Phoenix article “Doing Whiteness and Masculinities at School: Finnish 12- to 15-Year-Olds’ Narratives on Multiethnicity.”

⁷² Heino 2023, 60.

⁷³ Heino 2023, 62.

⁷⁴ Heino 2023, 62.

⁷⁵ Heino 2023, 62.

⁷⁶ Heino 2023, 63.

⁷⁷ Heino 2023, 62-63.

⁷⁸ Heino 2023, 71-72.

⁷⁹ Heino 2023, 73.

⁸⁰ Heino 2023, 70-71.

⁸¹ Heino 2023, 71.

⁸² Heino 2023, 69.

⁸³ Heino 2023, 62.

⁸⁴ Heino 2023, 73.

⁸⁵ Heino 2023, 73.

- ⁸⁶ Income per capita were: USA 15,480 USD/year and Finland 15,725 USD/year. See “Median Income by Country,” World Population Review website: <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/median-income-by-country> (accessed Nov. 25, 2020); The proportions of the poor in 2019: USA 17,8% v. Finland 6,5%, see Statista website: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/233910/poverty-rates-in-oecd-countries/>; See also OECD Data: <https://data.oecd.org/inequality/poverty-rate.htm> (both accessed, Oct. 8, 2021).
- ⁸⁷ The proportions of homeless people are approximately USA 0,18% v. Finland 0,06%, meaning that the number of homeless in the U.S. is three times higher proportionally. See ARA, Feb. 25, 2022: [https://www.ara.fi/fi/Fil/Tietopankki/Tilastot_ja_selvitykset/Asunnottomuus/Asunnottomat_2021\(62592\).Pdf-file:Asunnottomat_2021_ARAn_Selvitys_2_2022_korjattu.pdf](https://www.ara.fi/fi/Fil/Tietopankki/Tilastot_ja_selvitykset/Asunnottomuus/Asunnottomat_2021(62592).Pdf-file:Asunnottomat_2021_ARAn_Selvitys_2_2022_korjattu.pdf)); National Alliance to end Homelessness, “State of Homelessness: 2022 Edition”: <https://endhomelessness.org/homelessness-in-america/homelessness-statistics/state-of-homelessness/> (both accessed March 6, 2023).
- ⁸⁸ See the OECD figures of low earning in 2022 at: <https://data.oecd.org/earnwage/wage-levels.htm> (accessed, March 2, 2024); For other research results, see Iacurci 2021; On the 44 percent level of low-wage jobs, see Marcela Escobari, “The economy is growing and leaving low-wage workers behind,” Brookings Institute, Dec. 19, 2019: <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/education-plus-development/2019/12/19/the-economy-is-growing-and-leaving-low-wage-workers-behind/> (accessed May 11, 2021); See also Aimee Picchi, “Almost half of all Americans work in low-wage jobs,” CBS News, Dec. 2, 2019: <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/minimum-wage-2019-almost-half-of-all-americans-work-in-low-wage-jobs/> (accessed May 15, 2021).
- ⁸⁹ The World Bank, “Current Health Expenditure”: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SH.XPD.CHEX.GD.ZS> (accessed Oct. 17, 2020).
- ⁹⁰ For the numbers of the year 2018, see The World Bank, “Hospital Beds”: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SH.MED.BEDS.ZS> (accessed, May 11, 2020).
- ⁹¹ Covid deaths/million inhabitants, Sept. 30, 2021: USA: 2,107 v. Finland: 194 (actual numbers USA 724,778 v. Finland 1,062 deaths), Statista: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1093256/novel-coronavirus-2019ncov-deaths-worldwide-by-country/> (accessed, Oct. 8, 2021); See on the same topic by another source, dated Oct. 8, 2021: USA: 2,190 v. Finland: 191. “Reported Cases and Deaths by Country or Territory,” WorldOMeter: https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/?utm_campaign=homeAdvegas1/ (accessed, Oct. 8, 2021); Covid Deaths/million inhabitants, March 17, 2023: USA: 3,437 v. Finland: 1,618 (In Sweden the number at 2,328). WorldOMeter: <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/> (accessed March 17, 2023).
- ⁹² See for example, “Countries ranked by life expectancy,” WorldOMeter: <https://www.worldometers.info/demographics/life-expectancy/> (accessed, Oct. 17, 2020).
- ⁹³ OECD, “Skills Matter: Additional Results from the Survey of Adult Skills,” OECD Publications, 2019, 44: https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/skills-matter_1f029d8f-en.html (accessed, pdf downloaded July 30, 2024); On the American reactions to preliminary OECD literacy results of 2014, see Megan Rogers, “Troubling Stats on Adult Literacy,” Inside Higher Ed Website, Oct. 8, 2013: <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2013/10/08/us-adults-rank-below-average-global-survey-basic-education-skills> (accessed, July 30, 2024).
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²⁵⁶ See IUPUI, Office of Academic Affairs, *Guidebook for Inclusive Academic Appointments* (2023), 16: <https://academicaffairs.iupui.edu/AACContent/Html/Media/AACContent/Faculty-Affairs/appointments/Guidebook-for-Inclusive-Academic-Appointments-at-IUPUI.pdf>; See also “Academic Affairs provides new resources to ensure inclusive hiring practices,” Office of Academic Affairs, IUPUI, March 23, 2023: <https://today.iu.edu/live/news/3020-academic-affairs-provides-new-resources-to-ensure> (both accessed April 25, 2023); See also, Emma Colton, “University document seeks faculty that ‘speaks, acts, and dresses’ to connect with minority students,” *Fox News*, March 29, 2023: <https://www.foxnews.com/us/university-document-seeks-faculty-that-speaks-acts-and-dresses-to-connect-with-minority-students> (accessed March 31, 2023); Interestingly, even the University of Helsinki offers Purdue University’s academic writing standards for its staff via its internal Flamma web under the

- title, "Kirjasto- ja kielipalvelut, Sanastoja ja kielilinkkejä": <https://flamma.helsinki.fi/fi/group/kirjasto-ja-kielipalvelut/sanastoja> (accessed May 20, 2023).
- ²⁵⁷ Roman Liera & Cheryl Ching, "Reconceptualizing 'Merit' and 'Fit,'" *Higher Education Administration for Social Justice and Equity: Critical Perspectives for Leadership*, ed. by Adrianna Kezar & Julie Posselt, (New York: Routledge, 2019), 120.
- ²⁵⁸ Liera & Ching 2019, 120.
- ²⁵⁹ On all kinds of anti-DEI witch hunts going on in Anglo-Saxon universities, see for example, Peter Singer, "Will Cambridge support Free Speech?" Project Syndicate, April 12, 2024: <https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/cambridge-nathan-cofnas-free-speech-case-by-peter-singer-2024-04?ref=quilllette.com> (accessed, June 3, 2024).
- ²⁶⁰ Invitation for the staff of University of Helsinki: "INEQ Panel Discussion, 30.03.2023. 'Race and Internationalization in Academia: Imagining an Inclusive University,'" INEQ, March 3, 2023: <https://www.helsinki.fi/en/ineq-helsinki-inequality-initiative/ineq-panel-discussion-30032023> (accessed March 4, 2023); See also why "inequality is an intersectional phenomenon," on University of Helsinki INEQ Inequality Initiative official website under the topic of "Recognition": <https://www2.helsinki.fi/en/ineq-helsinki-inequality-initiative/research/recognition> (accessed Dec. 9, 2021).
- ²⁶¹ Oskari Lahtinen, "Construction and validation of a scale for assessing critical social justice attitudes," *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology*, 2024, 1-13.
- ²⁶² Lahtinen 2024.
- ²⁶³ Notably, Finnish women tended to have at least two times higher acceptance rate than men for such claims as that "if white people have on average a higher level of income than black, the reason is oppression" and that "microaggressions are to be challenged often and actively." People most sympathetic to intersectional ideas were typically women with leftist political orientation and more often than others suffering from mental anxiety. Only the gender "other" (3,3% of all interviewees) basically agreed with all intersectional claims and suggestions. See Lahtinen 2024.
- ²⁶⁴ Ilmonen 2011.
- ²⁶⁵ Seta ry., "Sukupuolen moninaisuus," Seta Website: <https://seta.fi/sateenkaaritieto/sukupuolen-moninaisuus/> (accessed March 17, 2023).
- ²⁶⁶ Seta 2023.
- ²⁶⁷ Ella Kohva, Elina Holopainen, Hanna Huopio, Päivi Keskinen, Marja Ojaniemi, Seppo Taskinen, Jorma Toppari, Taneli Raivio & Päivi J. Miettinen, "Lapsen epäselvän sukupuolen diagnostiikka ja hoito," *Duodecim*, vol. 137 (2021), 2118-2126; <https://www.duodecimlehti.fi/duo16478> (accessed March 17, 2023).
- ²⁶⁸ Atte Komonen, "Biologinen sukupuoli," *Tieteessä tapahtuu*, 1, 2020, 47-50.
- ²⁶⁹ The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Community Center, New York City, "What is LGBTQIA+?": <https://gaycenter.org/about/lgbtq/> (accessed, May 23, 2023).
- ²⁷⁰ Seta, "Sateenkaarisanasto" as dated March 20, 2023 (continuing updates), Seta ry.: <https://seta.fi/sateenkaaritieto/sateenkaarisnasto/> (accessed, May 23, 2023).
- ²⁷¹ "Queer-tutkimus/Queer-teoria," Tieteen termipankki: <https://tieteen termipankki.fi/wiki/Kirjallisuudentutkimus:queer-teoria> (accessed May 23, 2023).
- ²⁷² Ilmonen 2011.
- ²⁷³ Ilmonen 2011.
- ²⁷⁴ Ilmonen 2011 (emphasis added).
- ²⁷⁵ Njambi 2019, 2.
- ²⁷⁶ Ilmonen 2011.
- ²⁷⁷ Mentioning the revolutionary impact of the Kinsey reports does not, of course, indicate that later critique about his results would not be important. Traditional Western scientific thought is based on constant reviewing all new and old test results.

²⁷⁸ See, for example, a general introductory summary of Butler's performativity thesis, Dino Felluga, "Modules on Butler: On Performativity" in her *Introduction to Theories of Gender and Sex*, Purdue University Website:

<https://www.cla.purdue.edu/academic/english/theory/genderandsex/modules/butlerperformativity.html> (accessed, March 16, 2024).

²⁷⁹ See, for example, my later critique of Peltola & Phoenix, "Doing Whiteness and Masculinities at School."

²⁸⁰ Liera & Ching 2019, 118.

²⁸¹ Ilmonen 2018; For the quotation, see also Jennifer C. Nash, "Re-thinking intersectionality," *Feminist Review*, 89 (2008), 1-15.

²⁸² The statement was offered by Eveliina Heino in our email correspondence on the topic. She approved of publishing her opinion.

²⁸³ Hoegaerts et al. 2022, 9 (emphasis added).

²⁸⁴ Ilmonen 2011.

²⁸⁵ See especially my critique of Mike Savage's somewhat absurd notion of cultural inequalities.

²⁸⁶ Guess 2006, 654.

²⁸⁷ Ron Mallon, "Naturalistic Approaches to Social Construction," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2019 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.):

<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2019/entries/social-construction-naturalistic/> (accessed March 29, 2023).

²⁸⁸ Mallon 2023.

²⁸⁹ Mallon 2023.

²⁹⁰ On Bourdieu, see for example, Graham Scambler, "Social Theorists: Pierre Bourdieu," Graham Scambler, Emeritus Professor of sociology (UCL) Website, Nov. 11, 2015: <https://www.grahamscambler.com/sociological-theorists-pierre-bourdieu/> (accessed, March 20, 2024); Hannu Simola, *Koulutusihmeen paradoksit: Esseitä suomalaisesta koulutuspolitiikasta* (Tampere: Vastapaino, 2015), 16, 19.

²⁹¹ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (original *Surveiller et punir: Naissance de la prison*), 1975, transl. by Alan Sheridan (New York: Random House, Vintage Books, 1995), 194.

²⁹² Simola 2015, 18.

²⁹³ Guess 2006, 650.

²⁹⁴ Simola 2015, 16.

²⁹⁵ See, for example, Arto Selkälä, "Ihmistieteen kriisi," *Skeptikko* 1, 2024, 17-23.

²⁹⁶ Slavoj Žižek's formulation is this: "The truly difficult, but necessary, thing is to accept ... the ontological incompleteness of reality itself." Slavoj Žižek, *Interrogating the Real*, ed. by Rex Butler and Scott Stephens (London: Continuum, 2006), 334-335.

²⁹⁷ Allan Megill, *The Burden of Reason: Why Marx Rejected Politics and the Market?* (Lanham, MD.: Rowan & Littlefield, 2002), 212.

²⁹⁸ Megill 2002, 215.

²⁹⁹ Megill 2002, 212. As to the idea of "its contribution to the whole," it is notable that various social structures fail in this due to mere historical reasons; they degenerate, lose their function, and eventually get dismissed entirely.

³⁰⁰ See Ilmonen 2018.

³⁰¹ Alan Trachtenberg, *Brooklyn Bridge: Fact and Symbol*, Second Edition (1965, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979).

³⁰² See Ari Helo, *Thomas Jefferson's Ethics and the Politics of Human Progress* (Cambridge University Press, 2015), esp., 27-28, 34-40, 142-143.

³⁰³ Janne Lahti & Rinna Kullaa, "Johdanto: Kolonialismin monikasvoisuus ja sen ymmärtäminen Suomen kontekstissa," *Historiallinen aikakauskirja*, vol. 118 (4, 2020), 420-426, esp., 420.

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- ³⁰⁴ Studying intersectionality surprised me in terms of its epistemological arrogance, but I found myself thinking of the Nordic model anew.
- ³⁰⁵ Savage 2021, 11.
- ³⁰⁶ Crenshaw 1991, 1250, 1252.
- ³⁰⁷ James Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time* [1963] (London: Penguin Books, 1990), 76.
- ³⁰⁸ Mika Pantzar, “Tikittääkö velkakatastrofi—tutkimusten, populistien ja poliitikkojen käsityksiä,” *Osallisuusmedia*, March 15, 2023: <https://www.osallisuusmedia.fi/mika-pantzar-tikittaa-ko-velkakatastrofi-tutkimusten-populistien-ja-poliitikkojen-kasityksia/> (accessed March 23, 2023).
- ³⁰⁹ OECD Data, Government Debt, 2023: <https://data.oecd.org/gga/general-government-debt.htm> (accessed April 2, 2023).
- ³¹⁰ Peltola & Phoenix 2022, 109.
- ³¹¹ Peltola & Phoenix 2022, 109.
- ³¹² Peltola & Phoenix 2022, 109.
- ³¹³ Peltola & Phoenix 2022, 116.
- ³¹⁴ Peltola & Phoenix 2022, 110.
- ³¹⁵ Peltola & Phoenix 2022, 110.
- ³¹⁶ Peltola & Phoenix 2022, 110–111.
- ³¹⁷ Peltola & Phoenix 2022, 111.
- ³¹⁸ Peltola & Phoenix 2022, 111.
- ³¹⁹ Peltola & Phoenix 2022, 111.
- ³²⁰ Peltola & Phoenix 2022, 117.
- ³²¹ Peltola & Phoenix 2022, 118.
- ³²² Peltola & Phoenix 2022, 112.
- ³²³ McWhorter 2021, 22.
- ³²⁴ See Hoegaerts et al. 2022, 5, 211, 256 (“the most racist country of Europe”); I asked the Non-Discrimination Ombudsman office about their survey mentioned on page 256 in June 2024, and they assured me that their report was based on the same EU survey on the basis of which other claims were represented by other contributors to the compilation. Those surveys concerned 12–13 EU countries in Western Europe.
- ³²⁵ See “2018, Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey: Being Black in the EU”: https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2018-being-black-in-the-eu_en.pdf (pdf accessed, Sept. 21, 2023): on livelihood (64); housing (59); and police stops (34); Neither is there any conclusion about Finland being the most racist European country in the shorter 2019 summary report of the original 2018 report. In five different diagrams Finland fares worst only in one. Oddly enough, in Finland and in three other countries also other than African migrants were included among the interviewees (see report, page 21, note 22). “Being Black in the EU: Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey 2019”: https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2019-being-black-in-the-eu-summary_en.pdf (accessed Feb. 19, 2023).
- ³²⁶ “2022 Being Black in the EU – Experiences of people of African descent,” European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2023, 59, 63: <https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2023/being-black-eu> (accessed July 22, 2024).
- ³²⁷ See “The Inglehart-Welzel World Cultural Map,” World Values Survey 7 (2023): <https://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSContents.jsp> (accessed May 7, 2023).
- ³²⁸ Foucault 1995, 194.
- ³²⁹ Ilmonen 2011.
- ³³⁰ Ilmonen 2011; Let me add that Foucault makes two important reservations regarding his “field of discursive events,” namely that it is distinguishable from any pure linguistic analysis and opposite to the very notion of “history of thought” as a “definite discursive totality” itself. Michel Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge & the Discourse on Language* (original

L'archéologie du savoir, 1969 & *L'Ordre du discours*, 1971), transl. by A.M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), 24.

³³¹ Osmo Kivinen, *Koulutuksen järjestelmäkehitys. Peruskoulutus ja valtiollinen kouludoktriini Suomessa 1800- ja 1900-luvuilla* (Turku: University of Turku, 1988), 229, as quoted in Simola 2015, 70 (The formulation in Finnish: "mitä modernimpi koulu, sitä tiukemmat normaaliuden kriteerit, hienosyisempi arviointi, tehostetumpi seulonta ja sen seurauksena runsaammin poikkeavuutta, johon on tartuttava erityistoimin").

³³² Seikkula 2019.

³³³ Kolchin 2002, 169.

³³⁴ Savage 2021, 72.

³³⁵ Savage 2021, 62.

³³⁶ Savage 2021, 61.

³³⁷ Savage 2021, 57.

³³⁸ Ilmonen 2011.

³³⁹ Savage 2021, 197.

³⁴⁰ Hernández 2020.

³⁴¹ Saga Rosenström & Barbora Žiačková, "The North Engendered: Mythologized Histories, Gender and the Finnish Perspective on the Imagined Viking-Nordic Ideal," Hoegaerts et al. 2022, 73-98, 85 (quotation).

³⁴² Rosenström & Žiačková 2022, 73-98, 85 (quotation).

³⁴³ David Graeber & David Wengrow, *The Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity* (New York: Picador, Farrar, Strauss and Giroud, 2021), 382 (quotation).

³⁴⁴ Graeber & Wengrow 2021, 513.

³⁴⁵ Terry Eagleton, *The Idea of Culture* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 42-43.

³⁴⁶ Graeber & Wengrow 2021, 503.

³⁴⁷ Graeber & Wengrow 2021, 505.

³⁴⁸ Graeber & Wengrow 2021, 502.

³⁴⁹ See Graeber & Wengrow 2021, Chapter 2, 22-77.

³⁵⁰ For quotations, see Graeber & Wengrow 2021, 17.

³⁵¹ Malte Hinrichsen, "Racist Trademarks and the Persistence of Commodity Racism in Europe and the United States," *Diversity in Intellectual Property: Identities, Interests, and Intersections*, ed. by Irene Calboli, Srividhya Ragavan (New York: Cambridge University Press 2015), 130-148.

³⁵² Hinrichsen 2015.

³⁵³ Hinrichsen 2015.

³⁵⁴ Tobias Pötzsch, *Critical Perspectives on Social Inclusion in Integration Education Programs for Adult Migrants* (Ph.D. thesis, Helsinki: University of Helsinki & Unigrafia, 2020), 50.

³⁵⁵ Pötzsch 2020, 79.

³⁵⁶ Pötzsch 2020, 274.

³⁵⁷ Pötzsch 2020, 80.

³⁵⁸ Savage 2021, 36.

³⁵⁹ Savage 2021, 177.

³⁶⁰ Brinkley et al. 1991, 801.

³⁶¹ On percentages of the poor, see Brinkley et al. 1991, 894.

³⁶² Savage 2021, 36-41.

³⁶³ Savage 2021, 127.

³⁶⁴ Savage 2021, 287.

³⁶⁵ Max Roser (2016/2024) "The short history of global living conditions and why it matters that we know it," OurWorldInData.org: <https://ourworldindata.org/a-history-of-global-living-conditions> (accessed March 12, 2024); The figures offered by Roser: literacy (1820: 12 percent of people were able to read v. 87 percent today); education (1820: 17 percent received basic education v. 86 percent today), child mortality (1820: only 57 percent of

children lived 5 years or more v. 96 percent today), and unlike hardly anyone living under a democratic political order in 1820, today 56 percent of the entire global population do so; True, even today 85 percent of global population lives below the general poverty line. But ever since the beginning of the industrial revolution at about the year of 1820, even overall poverty has declined steadily in every four different categories or brackets of inadequate income (as defined by the U.N., namely below the 30 USD daily limit enjoyed in the Western developed countries).

³⁶⁶ Savage 2021, 87.

³⁶⁷ Savage 2021, 91.

³⁶⁸ Savage 2021, 89.

³⁶⁹ Savage 2021, 89.

³⁷⁰ Savage 2021, 90.

³⁷¹ Albert J. Beveridge in 1900, "In Support of an American Empire," Vincent Ferraro, Ruth C. Lawson Professor of International Politics at Mount Holyoke College Website: <https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/ajb72.htm> (accessed Oct. 10, 2015).

³⁷² Editors, "The Myth of Reverse Racism," The Alberta Civil Liberties Research Centre (ACLRC) Calgary Antiracism Education Website, Cared: <https://www.aclrc.com/myth-of-reverse-racism> (accessed June 24, 2022).

³⁷³ Hoegaerts et al. 2022, 8.

³⁷⁴ Hoegaerts et al. 2022, 8.

³⁷⁵ See for the quotations, Graeber & Wengrow 2021, 17.

³⁷⁶ Wairimū Ngarũiya Njambi, "What Sexuality? Whose Knowledge? Mapping 'Heterosexuality' and 'Homosexuality' within Transnational Feminisms," *Gender and Women's Studies* (2, 2019), 1-16, 9.

³⁷⁷ Njambi 2019, 13-15.

³⁷⁸ Hernández 2020.

³⁷⁹ Njambi 2019, 7.

³⁸⁰ Jeffery C. Mays and Zachary Small, "Jefferson Statue Will Be Removed from NYC Council Chambers," *New York Times*, Oct. 19, 2021, Sec. A, Page 1, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/18/nyregion/thomas-jefferson-statue-ny-city-council.html> (accessed Oct. 21, 2021).

³⁸¹ Introductory text on Grace Elizabeth Hale's *Making Whiteness* (1998) book on Hale Homepage: <https://www.graceelizabethhale.com/making-whiteness> (accessed April 24, 2024); On Whoopy Goldberg's view, see Youtube: "Controversy Over 'Gone With The Wind' Removal | The View": https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XGXJjWFH_aE (accessed June 3, 2024).

³⁸² A telling example of the new trend is *The New York Times Magazine's* "The 1619 Project" with its astonishing claims, such as that the American Revolution was fought "in order to ensure that slavery would continue" as well as the project's dismissal of criticism on mere racial grounds when criticism was offered by professional historians, all of whom happened to be white. Such prominent scholars in early American history as James Oakes, Sean Wilentz, and Gordon Wood have expressed their concern about this "displacement of historical understanding with ideology." Editors, "We Respond to the Historians Who Critiqued the 1619 Project," *New York Times*, Dec. 20, 2019/Update Jan. 19, 2021: <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/20/magazine/we-respond-to-the-historians-who-critiqued-the-1619-project.html> (accessed Feb. 18, 2022).

³⁸³ "The Night President Teddy Roosevelt Invited Booker T. Washington to Dinner," *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, No. 35, 2002: 4; The n-word here belongs to the historical document, and hence cannot be censured or ignored in terms of honest history writing, while certainly not used in any pejorative sense by the author.

³⁸⁴ Stephen B. Oates, *With Malice toward None: The Life of Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Mentor Book, New American Library, 1978), 339.

³⁸⁵ Alexander Hamilton's letter to Theodore Sedgwick, July 10, 1804 in Joanne B. Freeman, ed., *Alexander Hamilton Writings* (New York: The Library of America, 2001), 1022.

³⁸⁶ For the quotation, see Dumas Malone, *Jefferson the President, First Term. Jefferson and His Time*, vol. 4 (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2005), 466.

³⁸⁷ Jan Ellen Lewis, "Rethinking Women's Suffrage in New Jersey, 1776-1807," *Rutgers Law Review*, vol. 63 (3, 2011), 1017-1035, quotation, 1034.

³⁸⁸ Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1784) in Merrill D. Peterson ed., *Thomas Jefferson Writings* (New York: The Library of America, 1984), 143.

³⁸⁹ Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment* (*Die Philosophie der Aufklärung*, 1932), transl. by Fritz C. A. Koelln and James P. Pettegrove (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), vii.

³⁹⁰ On the number of casualties, see for example, "American War Deaths throughout History," Military Factory Com: https://www.militaryfactory.com/american_war_deaths/; or "American War Casualties," Info Please Website: <https://www.infoplease.com/us/american-wars/americas-wars-us-casualties-and-veterans> (both accessed July 9, 2019).

³⁹¹ Pötzsch 2020, 80.

³⁹² See, for example, Boyer et al 2004, 719.

³⁹³ "Who was Alice Paul?" Alice Paul Institute Website: <https://alicepaul.org/who-was-alice-paul/> (accessed Sept. 30, 2020).

³⁹⁴ Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983).

³⁹⁵ Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" (1893), Daniel J. Boorstin, ed., *An American Primer* (New York: University of Chicago Press and the American Library, Mentor Book, 1968), 542-570, quotations, 562.

³⁹⁶ Anja Kervanto Nevanlinna, "Urban History as a Form of Politics," Antti Bläfield, ed., *The Use and Abuse of History* (Helsinki: Siltala Publishing, 2016), 219.

³⁹⁷ Terence Ball and John Pocock, Introduction to *Conceptual Change and Constitution*, ed. by Terence Ball and J.G.A. Pocock (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1988), 9-10.

³⁹⁸ Errol Morris, *The Unknown Known*, History Films, Moxie Pictures and Participant Media, 2013.

³⁹⁹ I am here consciously leaving aside the rich legacy of the philosophy of history and just concentrating on the field of history writing itself for a practicing historian. On my views of good and less so philosophy of history, see Ari Helo, *History, Politics, and the American Past* (Routledge, 2020).

⁴⁰⁰ Chiel van den Akker, "Mink's Riddle of Narrative Truth," *Journal of the Philosophy of History*, vol. 7, 2013, 346-370, quotation 364.

⁴⁰¹ The colonial studies approach also excludes actual memory studies as a methodologically separate field of study from the discipline of history. For particularly informative articles in this respect, see for example, Allan Megill, "History, memory, identity," *History of the Human Sciences*, vol. 11 (3, 1998), 37-62; Mihai Stelian Rusu, "History and Collective Memory: The Succeeding Incarnations of an Evolving Relationship," *Philobiblon*, vol. 8 (2, 2013), 260-282. (See esp. Rusu's comparison between "Formal History" and "Collective Memory" in terms of opposing memory studies "to an idealized image of history, as it should be, not as it actually is," *ibid.*, 271.)

⁴⁰² Andrew Lawrence, "Uju Anya on the Queen," *Guardian*, Sept. 14, 2022: <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2022/sep/14/uju-anya-queen-nigeria-colonialism-empire>; On Faruqi statement, see Joseph Huitson, "Unhinged and insensitive," Sky News, Sept. 9, 2022: <https://www.skynews.com.au/australia-news/politics/unhinged-and-insensitive-greens-senator-mehreen-faruqi-slammed-over-appalling-tweet-claiming-queen-lead-racist-empire/news-story/fd4c58123feff803cf96755dbb2c225d> (both accessed May 5, 2024); A male graduate student from the University of Helsinki celebrated the death of the Queen Elizabeth in the Facebook by noting that "The Devil is dead. May she rot in Buckingham which is filled

with blood and curse of millions of colonized innocents who [are] still denied justice". I removed him from my Facebook "friends."

⁴⁰³ Savage 2021, 287.

⁴⁰⁴ Ilmonen 2011.

⁴⁰⁵ Peltola & Phoenix 2022, 105.

⁴⁰⁶ John Eligon, "A Debate Over Identity and Race Asks, Are African-Americans 'Black' or 'black'? The push to capitalize black to refer to African-Americans is far more than a typographical change," *New York Times*, June 26, 2020:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/26/us/black-african-american-style-debate.html> (accessed April 10, 2024).

⁴⁰⁷ Lydia Saad, "Gallup Vault: Black Americans' Preferred Racial Label," Gallup website, July 13, 2023: <https://news.gallup.com/vault/315566/gallup-vault-black-americans-preferred-racial-label.aspx> (accessed April 10, 2024).

⁴⁰⁸ Kaisa Ylhäinen, "Tutkija kertoo, miksi Sannikka-kohu syntyi—tästä woke- ja cancel-kulttuureissa on kyse," *Iltä-Sanomat*, Nov. 23, 2021 (emphasis added):

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⁴⁰⁹ Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* [1958] (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1998), 234.

⁴¹⁰ Martela et al. 2020.

⁴¹¹ Lyndsey Matthews & Michelle Baran, "These are the World's Happiest Countries in 2024," AFAR Website: <https://www.afar.com/magazine/the-worlds-happiest-country-is-all-about-reading-coffee-and-saunas> (accessed, June 15, 2024).

⁴¹² A recommended introduction to the topic is Charles Taylor, *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*, ed. by Amy Guzman (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994).

⁴¹³ C. L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* [1938], 2nd. Revised Edition, 1963 (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 180.

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Ari Helo (Ph.D) is a Docent/Adjunct Professor in Intellectual History and in North American Studies. He has held Senior University Lecturer positions in Intellectual History (University of Oulu), in Cultural Studies (University of Vaasa), and in North American Studies (University of Helsinki). He also worked as a research fellow for several years in Early American History (University of Virginia). Helo's scholarly articles have been published in Britain, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Hungary, the Netherlands, Russia, and the United States. His several books include *Thomas Jefferson's Ethics and the Politics of Human Progress* (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2014) and *History, Politics, and the American Past: Essays on Methodology* (New York: Routledge, 2020).

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